

medicine more human

Health is a topic both intimate and limitless. Its field is truly suggestive in scope of the whole universe turned inside out. The majestic qualities of minerals are liberated in organic fluidity, the tiny cells of life are incalculably busy, the sensitivity of active and reactive consciousness amazes, and all is touched by the slowly unfolding creative potential of individuality.

The centenary of anthroposophic medicine in 2020 came in the midst of a global health crisis. That jolt demands us to see ourselves more truly in this human existence on a living earth. We begin with an account some fifty years old, followed by excerpts from a new paper. The language change of half a century already reveals tremendous challenge and change.

“The young doctors sought not merely a deepened knowledge, but inwardly developed powers which could give depth and renewed life to the whole art of doctoring. To the stammering questions they brought to Dr. Steiner, he gave answers which can be summed up in the words: “You are seeking to make medicine more human.” ... In an age when even in medicine the materialistic world-outlook has more and more to say, and human perception threatens to be destroyed by technical and mechanical diagnosis, Rudolf Steiner with Ita Wegman laid down the first principles of the renewal of a medicine that has its starting-point entirely in the knowledge of the human being. This knowledge does not take into consideration only our bodily sheaths that may become sick, but also, what the eternal in us wishes to experience, has to experience, in an illness. With the knowledge of reincarnation and karma as background, the conception of sickness and healing given us by Rudolf Steiner can be ever further developed.”
—Grete Kirchner-Bockholt: (*Golden Blade* 1958, “*Widening the Art of Healing*”)

Rudolf Steiner & the Art of Healing

by Christoph Linder, MD

We reprint this essay from the first issue of The Journal for Anthroposophy, Spring 1965, for its clear and direct statement of the basis of anthroposophic medicine (AM), which Dr. Linder brought to the United States. The medical and social changes of 56 years are also of interest. Dated references to then-current activities have been deleted, and gender signifiers (man, he, his, him) that were considered neutral in 1965 are updated.

The scientist of today generally does not like to speak of the spiritual, though they may feel very clearly that there is a realm of dynamic creative forces in nature that cannot be measured and that cannot be perceived by the ordinary senses. They consider the spiritual as belonging to the department of philosophy, pure psychology, or religion. The question arises whether it is possible to raise the knowledge of a spiritual world above mysticism and feeling to the level of conscious and concrete perception.

If the answer is *no*, all the teachings of spiritual science are meaningless. If it is *yes*—and Rudolf Steiner’s answer is a clear *yes*—then the greatest vista opens up for medical science, namely a knowledge of body, soul and spirit, and how they interpenetrate each other, that goes far beyond any attempts of modern science and psychology.

The student will find that nothing in this knowledge

of the supersensible is in contradiction to medical science of today. True, interpretations of established facts may differ, but it is equally true that such spiritual science would be pointless without close association with modern science. As a medical practitioner of many years, I can say that modern research becomes infinitely more interesting when seen in this light.

Anthroposophy deals, among other things, with the study of creative, dynamic forces as they are related to physiological processes. One should never think that a chemical process discovered in a living organism is identical with one seen in a chemical laboratory. Not only is the context and the chemical environment a completely different one, but the chemical process serves a different purpose in a living organism where it is the vehicle for a vital, organic force. Modern biochemistry has made great strides and has discovered many finer chemical reactions in which the quantity of substance involved is minimal, effect and dynamic process maximal. A world of enzymes, vitamins, hormones, amino acids, etc., has been opened up, but none has meaning in itself, just as the paint that an artist uses has in itself nothing to do with the experience expressed by the painting. Most scientists recognize

this fact; they may not always remember it when interpreting their data. Unless a way is found in which the supersensible part of the human being can be perceived just as clearly as the sensible or physical part, we would have to give up any scientific attempt in this direction. Emotional and dogmatic efforts of an unhealthy nature have brought this realm into discredit, and it is the task of anthroposophy to present the path of knowledge to the spirit in its rightful light.



In the search for the cause of illness humanity has developed various ideas during the course of history. There was a time in antiquity when we thought that illness came from God as a kind of punishment and at the same time as a kind of wise guidance by destiny. In the Middle Ages illness was the work of the devil. Sick people were seized by demonic powers. In our times sickness is considered to be a nuisance. Medical science would say disease is due to bacterial invasion, virus infection, hormonal disturbance, etc., or it is freely admitted that we don't know its cause. However, science has come to an interesting conclusion in regard to certain chronic illnesses.

We all know that each organism transforms food matter into its own individual body substance which is the vehicle for the expression of its individuality. Now science has found clear evidence that in some constitutions certain proteins and chemical compounds are produced that are not found in the healthy organism. Formerly science spoke of a predisposition to illness. Today it is more specific. It speaks of an inborn error of metabolism.

In cancer and allied diseases any amount of modern research has failed to uncover a valid cause. Interesting observations have been made about the biological behavior of cancer which varies greatly from one patient to another. But the enigma is the host. It determines the course of the illness and degree of malignancy. *The human individual is the host.*

Investigating the cause of illness, we go deeper, step by step, into the problem. We may ask, why is that person so tense and so overactive all of a sudden? We may answer that their thyroid is functioning too strongly. We may ask, why is the thyroid doing this? The next answer may be that the pituitary gland overstimulates the thyroid. Then we may ask, why is the pituitary overstimulated? The answer being that it is the influence of the hypothalamus, a certain region at the base of the brain which affects the pituitary and is also known to be sensitive to all kinds of psychological and mental influences. In all

these instances we end up at the same point, the individual themselves.

Health, evolution, the individual

Rudolf Steiner stresses the fact that illness and health have to do with human evolution. The human being in us is not fully developed as yet, but consciously or unconsciously we are striving toward our human goal. Errors and weaknesses that become second nature in the individual may gradually sink into the more physical part of their existence and cause predisposition to illness.

In judging the state of health and normalcy of a person, we lack a yardstick by which to measure. There may be an individual who presents a picture of robust health, never has any complaints, may even be successful in their work, and yet very little of their human abilities may manifest themselves. On the other hand, we may have an individual of delicate health, sensitive, full of aches and pains, but creative and strong in character. Who is healthy and who is more normal? Statistics do not help us. We lack a reliable yardstick as long as we do not develop a feeling for the meaning of human life. Once we do, all our efforts are directed toward helping each person to achieve their individual goal.

As practicing physicians, whatever our advice or prescription, we have to ask ourselves: do we introduce something that improves the condition of the body in such a way that it becomes a better instrument for the expression of the individual, or do we do something that blocks or hinders this relationship? We have in modern medicine potent drugs at our disposal—more than ever during the last ten years—drugs that alter not only the physical condition but the emotional state and the state of consciousness as well. When we feel apathetic we take energizers, when we are excited, tranquilizers. Astonishingly effective medicines are available to relieve pain and spasm, to produce sleep and to reduce weight.

Are we really satisfied with the results, or are they only short-lived? I don't think that many of us doctors believe that we have thus far found a real solution. Such remedies are eminently practical or convenient in difficult situations, and we must admit that even with a better knowledge we cannot always do what we would like to and feel that we should do. It all depends on that little known and greatly variable factor, the human individual.

When we go through illness, we naturally look forward to a quick recovery. In the light of Rudolf Steiner's spiritual science, illness is not mere nuisance, it becomes

a meaningful event. Going through a period of recovery after an acute illness is a wonderful experience in itself, besides giving us a let-up from the tension and haste of everyday life. When you observe a child with poliomyelitis from the beginning of the illness to the end, and when you observe the child's daily efforts to overcome weakness and paralysis, and, finally, you see full recovery achieved, then you see also that the strength of character and will-power of that person have gained enormously. Someone who goes through an acute heart attack goes through a lesson, and a wise guidance and treatment can deepen this lesson. Cancer is frequently an illness of long duration, with intermittent periods of apparently complete recovery, and how different are people in the way they go through such illness. The same applies naturally to all chronic ailments. Quite frequently it happens that a patient states to their doctor who may be known also as a friend for many years, how grateful they are to life for the experience they went through during the illness. It may have given them an opportunity to find themselves and to gain more self-knowledge. Such events belong to the greatest of our lives and may mean a turning point in our inner and outer development.

Ideas for treatment

A better understanding of illness will naturally lead to new ideas concerning treatment, and this subject is really closest to our hearts. Throughout Rudolf Steiner's work he touches again and again on subjects which throw light on the field of medical knowledge and during the last five years of his life, from 1920 to 1925, he devoted much of his time to medicine itself. In 1920 he gave his first course of twenty lectures to a group of doctors who gathered from many countries of Europe at the Goetheanum in Dornach, and thereafter every year at least two lecture courses were given to physicians. Much of this work was done in close association with the late Dr. Ita Wegman with whom he established a new medical center and founded a sanatorium known as the Clinical and Therapeutical Institute in Arlesheim, not far from the Goetheanum in Dornach and near Basel, Switzerland. With her he wrote the book, *Fundamentals of Therapy*, which bore the subtitle, *An Extension of the Art of Healing through Spiritual Knowledge*.

During these years, hundreds of doctors took up the challenge implicit in Rudolf Steiner's work. A number of clinical institutions were founded and Rudolf Steiner, working in close collaboration with the interested phy-

sicians, visited them at frequent intervals and observed many hundreds of patients and a great variety of illness. Here we are faced with the fact that it was a spiritual investigator who saw the patient, recognized the line of their destiny and evolution, and gave advice on how the illness could be treated, indicating many new remedies, even going into the details of dosage and concentration. It is almost inconceivable to modern people that such a thing could happen in all openness and sanity. How cautious we are in this direction, since we have all experienced so much emotionalism and deceit in these realms. But the great event did occur, and in the memory of those who witnessed it, it belongs to the most important events of their lives. For many it was a turning point. Innumerable remedies were prepared on the basis of Dr. Steiner's direct advice, at first by pharmacists and doctors themselves. But within a few years the Weleda pharmaceutical concern in Arlesheim, Switzerland, and in Schwäbisch Gmünd, Germany, were established. Today the Weleda is a flourishing concern with branches in many European countries and in the United States. For a physician it is a great experience to visit these laboratories and their pharmaceutical gardens. Infinite care is taken in the raising of the plants in the proper soil, or in gathering them from their natural habitat. They are picked at a time of the day and in the season in which their qualities are most potent, and as many of the imponderables as possible are considered in the manufacture of each remedy.

The selection of a remedy depends to a large extent on the goal we pursue. Naturally we all want to relieve suffering and would like to cure illness, but in every disease there is a short-range as well as a long-range aspect.



We are confronted with this problem already when we treat children's diseases. The general tendency is to treat symptoms, fever and pain, etc., and to make them disappear as quickly as possible, on the assumption that illness is a mere nuisance. Such an attitude is quite understandable. It does not search for meaning in illness. However, from the standpoint of anthroposophy, children's diseases and fever in childhood are a manifestation of the process of adjustment that takes place between the individuality of the child, which is not subject to heredity, and the physical organism, into which it incarnates, and which is subject to heredity. The doctor's task is to guide the child wisely through such illness, protecting it from dangers and making it easier to go through it.

The physician who has frequent opportunity to ob-

serve a child intimately before and after they have undergone such illness, notices time and again that certain obstacles have been removed, that a child who was tired and slow for months, suddenly becomes himself again.

The prevention and treatment of infectious diseases which usually cause fever belong to the miracles of our time. Thanks to modern prevention, certain dreadful infections have almost vanished from the scene, and yet we have to ask ourselves: do we comprehend the problems involved completely? Without wishing for a return of all these infections, we have to try to understand all aspects of disease. *Fever is an act of self-defense.* It has been used in the treatment of chronic illnesses of various kinds, in some of them with remarkable success. The older organism does not develop fever so readily, and this apparently is the reason why recovery may be delayed. One cannot help feeling on the basis of numerous observations that fever has a rejuvenating influence when kept within boundaries. This naturally does not mean that we should let things go unchecked; it calls for wise guidance and interest in the long-range aspect of illness. A very active treatment may be given.

Anthroposophical remedies have been worked out for certain types of illnesses. This does not mean that they cure all these illnesses. In some instances they are far better than what is available, in other cases they are an adjunct to other treatments. Situations of life and illness are much too varied to allow us to use only one type of remedy. The main thing is that we have a clear goal in mind as to what we wish to achieve.

When asked whether any of these new remedies can cure a fully developed pneumonia within two or three days, we have to say *no*. If there is a compelling reason for achieving such a quick result, the remedies that will do this must be used. Are we, however, doing the right thing in always combating fever with quick remedies? Is there really only a nuisance value to disease? This is a problem that is hotly debated today in medical journals. The medical profession has become a little more cautious in prescribing these quick remedies. A host of new diseases have made their appearance or now occur more frequently than heretofore.

One is often asked whether anthroposophy has already worked out a cure for cancer and we again must answer *no*, not an infallible cure. However, Dr. Steiner has indicated a treatment for cancer, and it is being used successfully in many cases, frequently as adjunct to sur-

gery or other accepted methods of treatment. As to the cause, Rudolf Steiner suggested a lack of integration of the higher members of the human organization in the physical organism. In a person with a predisposition toward cancer it seems as if certain innate creative and spiritual desires that never had an opportunity to express themselves harmoniously throw themselves back upon the organs in a devastating manner. It is the conviction of physicians who work along these lines that a cure for cancer will eventually be found on this basis, and some progress has already been made. From such a standpoint it is unthinkable that cancer should not have to do with modern civilization and the evolution of humanity.

The treatment of acute illnesses and emergencies has made great progress. Cardiac and other emergencies would be treated in a similar way by all schools of thought, but after an acute attack usually the chronic problem remains. The understanding of chronic ailments lags far behind in modern science and the treatment is controversial. Here there is a field of contributions from anthroposophical medical science. Whatever we do, we must always bear in mind that therapy is not a field for dogma and one-sidedness.

The arts as therapy

Medicinal treatment is just one branch of the art of healing, very important in acute illness, helpful in the treatment of chronic disease; but in real therapy all the arts can be made use of as well. In our present-day way of thinking, painting, sculpture, dancing, etc., are considered as hobbies, unless we practice them professionally. They are, of course, used in occupational therapy, but mainly in order to assist people to kill time, or to keep them busy. This is, however, a very limited standpoint. Rudolf Steiner revealed how all the arts can be used in the art of healing. If they are properly integrated in the life of the individual, they liberate creative powers and they help self-knowledge.

Curative eurhythm, developed by Rudolf Steiner as an adaptation of the art of eurhythm which he originated, belongs especially to this field. It is used in the treatment of chronic cases, and the movements are not merely designed to strengthen the muscles. Experience demonstrates that practically every organ of the body can be influenced through bodily movement. Mechanical movements have something in them that is foreign to the body. They introduce a routinizing, automatic influence into an organism in which they should not predominate. We

are surrounded by such influences to an overwhelming degree, in our age of machines. Too easily do we forget that they have a dehumanizing influence on us all. In curative eurythmy an artistic movement is given in rhythmic repetition. With a relatively small physical effort, a dynamic influence works into the organism. Curative eurythmy has been most successful in the treatment of many chronic ailments.

Nutrition and agriculture

Something must also be said about nutrition. Again, the same influences of modern civilization are at work. Every thing has to be big, fast, practical and good-looking. To prevent spoilage, we add chemicals; to make food good-looking, we process it, thereby removing the vitamins; and then we try to make good by adding them again.

Farmland is infested with an infinite variety of bugs. Powerful chemicals are used to kill them. After a few years you discover that they become resistant, and you have to use more chemicals or new ones. And there the vicious circle begins. Something is interrupted in the household of nature. The poison that is introduced remains in small traces and enters our daily food. By the same token, insects and animals useful to man, such as bees, birds, fish, etc., are either killed or damaged. The problem is similar to the one in medicine—the long-range view versus the short-range result. An increasing number of physicians realize that this problem is a very serious one. They demand a better quality of food, and they know that it has to start with the soil. We need in our work the help of the farmer who fully understands this situation, as well as the education of the consumer public to the dangers and values involved.

Rudolf Steiner's contributions to agriculture are of the greatest significance. Nutrition has a great influence on health, and especially on the finer faculties of man. We do not appreciate this sufficiently because our senses are too coarse or too dull. We may know that sometimes after a big meal we feel very drowsy, but we don't realize that there is a chronic state of drowsiness towards the spirit prevailing in this age of over-eating. Rudolf Steiner stated at one time that wrong nutrition is one of the reasons why people have difficulty in understanding the reality of the spiritual world. Diet, too, can be applied more intelligently on the basis of this new knowledge. It can influence profoundly the growth and development of the child and is very important also in adults. Diet is not merely determined from the standpoint of digestibility and calories, but it varies according to types of illness and

constitution, and sometimes temperament.

Medicine and education

Medicine also has a strong link with education. The organism of the child can be compared to a piece of clay that is still moist and can be molded. Environment, physical and spiritual influences help to shape the body. Spiritual science is quite specific on this subject. Vice versa, it is also true that physical exercise and pharmaceutical agents can profoundly influence the mentality of a child. In the Rudolf Steiner schools a physician works in close association with the teachers, not merely giving them a report about the state of a child's physical health but trying to assist the teachers in that border realm of education and medicine. My own association with the teachers of a Rudolf Steiner school has been a rich experience in my life and has given me the conviction that here an attempt is really made to understand the development of the human being. The primary goal is not merely to secure a diploma, but to educate the human individual. Such thoughts the physician should also carry with them in their own work, not only when they treat children but also when they see adults. Medicine and education are closely related throughout life. What is more or less in the minds of many of us, Rudolf Steiner pronounced more clearly and more specifically.

Tuned to greatness

Rudolf Steiner's contribution to the renewal and extension of the art of healing was not given in the form of a multitude of isolated facts, each of which is to be individually accepted or rejected. He opened up an approach to medicine, in the light of spiritual investigation, which enables the physician to extend and deepen their own medical knowledge and experience and to become both more practical and more creative in their profession. In addition to the growing number of individual doctors who base their work on anthroposophical knowledge, there are centers in several countries where this work goes forward. ...

Why is it that this great impulse is still so little known by the medical profession as a whole? Many reasons can be brought forward. The main trends in modern civilization and the immediate demands of life, though necessary, run counter to it. The achievements of synthetic chemistry are miraculous within their own field and overshadow the discoveries of spiritual science that are far more significant but less conspicuous. Modern science may feel itself to be on solid ground, but modern civiliza-

tion has certainly not given proof that this is so. Modern science has worked with a tremendous expenditure of effort and money for many years, and spiritual scientific research is still at its very beginning, working with greatly limited funds. The scientist who has observed these efforts for many years can say without exaggeration that far greater results could be achieved if only one-hundredth of the effort and money spent for modern research were devoted to research along the lines indicated by Rudolf Steiner. And then there is a human inadequacy, and perhaps a lack of courage. We are not tuned any more to greatness. This is the reason why we have difficulty in discovering and appreciating greatness of the kind which is revealed in the life and work of a man who lived in our time—Rudolf Steiner.

Christoph Linder, MD, (1897–1964), born in Basel, Switzerland, immigrated in 1926 at the suggestion of Dr. Ita Wegman and at the invitation of Irene Brown, the first physician to practice anthroposophically extended medicine in the USA. He established his practice in New York City in the building in which the Rudolf Steiner School also opened in 1928. Involved in the life and conferences in Spring Valley, NY, he participated in the 1938 meeting that resulted in the Biodynamic Farming & Gardening Association. His appeal to members in 1956 led to the establishment of the Rudolf Steiner Fellowship Community. He wrote this article shortly before his death in July, 1964. [Adapted from *Into the Heart's Land*, by Henry Barnes.]

The Relevance of Anthroposophic Medicine for Our Times

The following is excerpted from a longer essay which we expect to make available soon in a new online edition of *being human*.

Conventional medicine based on the natural sciences almost exclusively focuses on the physical body, the lowest member of the human organism. This is where chemistry, physics and mechanics play a legitimate role in medicine when the knowledge is adapted to the human being. Of course, biological sciences also contribute to conventional medicine's knowledge base, but the results are usually interpreted materialistically and are by and large not addressed directly and consciously for true therapeutic effect. The supersensible etheric life body is the true orchestrator of basic biological processes like growth, reproduction,

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Gallery Leszek Forczek



West Coast "Illuminism" artist Leszek Waladyslaw Forczek unexpectedly crossed the "rainbow threshold" May 20, 2019

at the age of 72. Illuminism painting relates to the mysteries of Light and Darkness, the underlying realities of nature, the cosmos, and the individual soul. Color is at the heart of Forczek's engaging, elegant and thoughtful sensibility. His work is based on Goethe's color theory as developed by Rudolf Steiner; and English-born, Dutch-resident artist and color therapist Liane Collot d'Herbois. Forczek stumbled upon a solo exhibition of Collot's paintings in Colmar, France, a turning point in his young life. Her breakthrough work on Light, Color, & Darkness encouraged Forczek to a life-long development of Illuminism as an artistic and spiritual path.

Forczek wrote that Rudolf Steiner "actively responded to the request of artists such as Kandinsky and Mondrian who were searching for a spiritual meaning in painting, during a time of chaos and crisis... Steiner provided artists with a new basis to approach art, color, and painting, making countless reference to the correlation of light, color and darkness with thinking, feeling and willing. This understanding of color as integral to the evolution of the human being—both cosmic and physical—was able to endow art with a healing and spiritual property."

Forczek's paintings are characterized by their unique sense of luminosity, space, and movement, harmonizing the inner and outer aspects of Light, Color and Darkness: this balance of inner and outer is in its essence, beauty, art and life. He taught throughout the US for over 18 years. His last major project, Topaz Mountain, four years in the making, was a unique chromatic animation of landscape paintings accompanied by compelling poetry and music. It is a transformational statement, mysterious and luminous, of the beauty and vulnerability of mountains, lakes, and glaciers.



Forczek's work is in public and private collections throughout North America. Discover more at his website www.bluepieta.com or by contacting Casse Waldman Forczek (707-349-4042 or cassestar@icloud.com).