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A “breviary” for the anthroposophic medical movement

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The breviary as a continual accompaniment for the inner path is an integral part of the vocation of priest. In the *Course for Young Doctors* Steiner recommends that physicians engage in meditative work “according to possibility and need”. (...)

Below, in a kind of “breviary for the week” the core meditations for physicians are placed into the context of all branches of medical-therapeutic work. A sequence has been chosen for this which has repeatedly been taken up by individual colleagues since the annual conferences at the Goetheanum between 1998 and 2004 – where there was a continuous focus on meditative schooling.

This offers the possibility of bringing fully to mind the core work impulses of the anthroposophic medical movement and of the professional groups working within it, and of doing so in a weekly rhythm, if so desired. The qualities of each day of the week are also helpful for continually refreshing and enlivening this work.

Sunday / Sun

The meditative path in the field of medicine which Rudolf Steiner highlighted starts with the so-called warmth meditation.

Steiner gave this to a group of students - the “young doctors” – who had asked him about qualities of “morality and love” in medicine. It starts by asking “How do I find the good?” The question of giving and receiving good treatment, of the good doctor, and the good doctor-patient relationship, is the lifeblood of all “good” medicine. Through the warmth meditation the physician learns to know his own etheric body in a differentiated way, and to strengthen his moral qualities. This meditation also supports interdisciplinary collaboration and conveys the warmth which the anthroposophic medical movement needs to live. In pursuing this initial question the meditation leads to awareness of the four sources of etheric forces:

The warmth ether works strongly in the interpersonal realm, in humanity’s warmth centre, in the Christ being who mediates and permeates everything. The light ether radiates from the heart, the tone ether from the lower body/metabolic realm, while the life ether comes to the fore in the head’s life and thinking activity. Moral ideals are what warm and illumine us, inspire and enliven our work. New etheric forces are needed for healing, culturally creative deeds.

For decades this meditation has found a home wherever anthroposophic medicine and curative education have been taken up and practiced out of a spiritual impulse. Today, therefore, it can be seen and experienced as the spiritual soil in which research and practice of anthroposophic medicine can take root. Those who wish to take up this meditation may best have it explained to them by an anthroposophic physician who works with it and – the same as with other meditative material – write it out personally for themselves.

Just as the sun is the core of warmth and light, but also the source of all life on earth, so the warmth meditation mediates the path to experiencing the soul-sun and spirit-sun in a way that gives orientation for therapeutic work.

Warmth Meditation

Preparation: How do I find the good?

1. Can I think the good?
I cannot think the good.
Thinking is brought about by my ether body.
My ether body works in the fluid of my body.
Therefore in the fluid of the body I do not find the good.
2. Can I feel the good?
I can indeed feel the good, however it is not made present by me if I only feel it.
Feeling is brought about by my astral body.
My astral body works in the aeriform of my body.
Therefore in the aeriform of the body
I cannot find the good that exists through me.
3. Can I will the good?
I can will the good.
Willing is brought about by my ego.
My ego works in the warmth-ether of my body.
Therefore in the warmth I can physically realise the good.

Meditation: I feel my humanity in my warmth.

1. I feel light in my warmth.
(Take care that this sensation of light emerges in the region where the physical heart lies.)
2. I feel, sounding, world substance in my warmth.
(Take care that the peculiar sensation of tone goes from the lower body towards the head but spreading out into the whole body.)
3. I feel in my head world life stirring in my warmth.
(Take care that the peculiar sensation of life spreads from the head to the whole body.)

Rudolf Steiner¹

Monday / Moon

The moon stands in a specially coordinated relationship with the earth and the sun, giving rise, for example to both sun and moon eclipses. Moon forces imbue all regenerative processes and natural fertility with rhythm. We too retain during life the 2 5-hour rhythm of the moon's daily orbit of the earth as an underlying factor of our circadian biorhythm, acquiring this only during childhood from the sun as the external time-giver. The first meditation from the Christmas course for young doctors leads us into an experience of the healing spirituality of nature. This meditation connects, in particular, physicians and pharmacists in inner work.

Ye healing Spirits,
You unite
With Sulphur's blessing
In the ethereal fragrance;

You come to life
In upward springing Mercury
Dewdrop
Of growing
And becoming.

You make your halting place
In the Earth Salt
Which nourishes the root
In the soil.

I will unite
The Knowledge of my Soul
With Fire of the flower's fragrance;

I will bestir
The Life of my Soul
On the glistening drop of leafy morning;

I will make strong
The Being of my Soul
With the all hardening Salt
Whereby the Earth with loving care
Nurtures the root.

Rudolf Steiner²

Tuesday / Mars

The two-year rhythm of the Mars orbit has the quality of a great, macrocosmic respiration, in which, at one point, Mars penetrates far out into the realm beyond the sun, between the asteroids and Jupiter, then subsequently approaches the earth so that it enters the planetary sphere between Venus and Mercury, in the realm between the sun and the earth. This dynamic corresponds to the battle, mediated by the rhythmic system, between light and weight, as Rudolf Steiner portrays this in the last meditation in the Christmas course for young doctors. Here we see the daily battle between health and illness: between matter with its "might of heaviness" and spirit with its "power of radiance". In this meditation we are led to an understanding of the medicinal value of each substance or of an internal process within us. Rudolf Steiner brings this exercise into especially close connection with eurythmy therapy. It also inspires the other art therapies, which work in a healing way within this interplay of forces:

See in thy Soul
Power of Radiance;
Feel in thy Body

Might of Heaviness!
In Power of Radiance
Rays the Spirit-I;
In Might of Heaviness
God-Spirit wells.
Yet shall not
Power of Radiance
Lay hold of
Might of Heaviness,
Nor may
Might of Heaviness
Permeate
Power of Radiance.
For when Power of Radiance seizes
Might of Heaviness,
And when Might of Heaviness enters
Power of Radiance,
Then in World-confusion Soul and Body
Bind each other
Unto Perdition.

Rudolf Steiner³

Wednesday / Mercury

In its orbit around the sun, as seen from the earth, Mercury describes the famous hexagram, the healing, harmonizing dynamic figure which we know from the hermetic tradition as the symbol of Hermes Trismegistos, and from the Jewish tradition as the seal of Solomon.⁴

Rudolf Steiner speaks of this in his lectures on the principles of alchemy and Rosicrucianism. The forces of our upper (light) and lower (weight) organization are symbolically depicted in two triangles which interpenetrate but do not merge.

We have already become familiar with these principles in the previous exercise relating to the power of radiance and the might of heaviness. Here though, rather than address the aspect of conflict, the verse concerns the healing, balancing Mercury aspect of this polarity of forces. Rudolf Steiner characterizes this all-encompassing, integrating principle of healing in the Easter course for young doctors.

Feel in the fever's measure
The Spirit-gift of Saturn.
Feel in the pulse's number
The Soul-powers of Sun;
Feel in the weight of substance
The forming power of Moon;
Then wilt thou see in thy healing will
Earthly man's healing need.

Rudolf Steiner⁵

All the forces of the four evolutionary stages of the earth itself and its creatures, starting from the great planetary warmth body – whose radius extended from today's earth to Saturn – are characterized in their relationship with the human being on earth today.⁶ It becomes apparent that the struggle for balance and health is not only of benefit to each individual. The “need for healing” also configures the evolutionary forces of the earth and its creatures in the cosmos, which unfold through time. The human being can learn to sense himself as an ordering, healing being within cosmic evolution.

This meditation unites the work of physicians especially with that of nurses – the professional group for which measuring temperature, taking the pulse and monitoring weight are part of daily routine. Rudolf Steiner highlights as the general need for healing today the regaining of a spiritual worldview that can overcome materialism. Then karmic conflicts from former incarnations can be morally resolved rather than having to embed themselves in the body as illness.

Thursday / Jupiter

Jupiter is the planet of maturation, of wisdom, and of the pain connected with this process. Jupiter remains in the area of a single zodiac sign during the time that the sun requires to travel once through the whole zodiac. The sun's orbit relates to Jupiter as the moon orbit does to the sun. The secret of twelve, of the seasons, of encompassing a whole circle and of completion is implicit in its energy constitution. The first meditation in the Easter course for young doctors⁷ asks us to see the whole development of the human being within the cosmos as it now is. All healing professions that approach health and illness with scientific interest, and undertake anthroposophic research, are united through the guidance of this meditation. This is because, for this, we need a thorough understanding of the human being and his connection with the configuring forces of the cosmos. Only the physical body itself belongs to the earth and is attracted by it. The etheric body works entirely out of the cosmos, forming the physical body with its peripheral forces of suction. At the centre of this configuration stands the moon, whose formative power is modified by the other planets and particularly by the differing constellations of the fixed star zodiac: “And we will not get any further until astronomy (in the sense I have just explained) is reintroduced into medical science. Really most of what is said there says little. People hop about from one thing to another, you might say, ascribing symptoms and processes in the human being to either external environmental conditions or to genetics. But if you examine this in detail, it leads to nothing at all, because people forget that the human form really must be derived from what gives rise to knowledge of the starry heavens – in a qualitative sense, derived from its inner nature. The most important thing in this human form and development, however, is the moon.”⁸

The moon always exerts an influence, and the other planets support this influence.

“Behold, what is joined in the cosmos:
Thou feelest the forming of man.”

Just as the moon is primarily connected with the human form, so the sun is connected with soul capacity, with ensoulment.

“Behold, all that moves thee in Air:
Thou wilt live man's ensoulment.”

The capacity to spiritualize the human being can be grasped in connection with Saturn:

“Behold, what is changed in the Earthly:
Thou wilt discern the spiritualizing of man.”⁹

Friday / Venus

Venus describes its harmonious “*Pentagramma Veneris*” in the heavens during a period of eight years. The form is the symbol of the upright human being, the pentagram. Here all physical, soul and spiritual forces work together in a way to enable the human being to come to expression as an upright, loving human being at every age. In the last lecture of the Easter course for young doctors,¹⁰ Rudolf Steiner introduces a meditation which relates to the doctor/therapist-patient relationship, and provides the foundation for every therapeutic dialogue through to the specific therapies of biography work, psychotherapy and pastoral medical counseling. Every therapeutically-oriented encounter between human beings needs to include a sense of life as a whole, with its tendencies to illness and opportunities for healing. The doctor/therapist works to develop Imagination and Inspiration in relation to the patient’s etheric and astral bodies. The forces of the etheric body take care of the physical body’s formation from embryonal development through to the most advanced age. The task of the therapist is to imagine and reflect these forces as processes in his own soul. This develops the capacity to perceive the etheric body imaginatively. The forces of the astral body, on the other hand, induce ageing, with its differentiating tonal configuration, its dry, airy nature; and they exert their influence from the future back to the moment of birth. If these forces’ activity is sensed in a vibrant way, this leads to a grasping of the astral body through inspiration:

Shove man’s earliest time
(- the embryonic life -)
On into childhood,
And carry childhood on
Into the days of youth.
There will appear to you, condensed,
Human ether being
Behind the body’s structure.
(- physical body in its structure -)

Shove old age’s density
Back into the prime of life,
And the prime of life
Back into the life of youth.
There will ring forth in cosmic tones
The working of man’s soul
(- astral body -)
Out of the Ether life.

Rudolf Steiner¹¹

“You will realize from what I have told you that guiding lines for meditation are not given out as a commandment but are based upon things that can be understood. When a human being is guided to meditation in the proper way, conditions are not as they once were in the ancient East, when both the upbringing of children and the development of old age rested upon quite

different foundations. When somebody is given meditations today, they are of such a form that he realizes and understands what he is doing with himself. In the East the child was under the guidance of his Dada. This meant that the child was taught and brought up according to the Dada's mode of life. The child learned no more than he was able to learn by watching the Dada. When a grown-up man wished to make progress, he had his Guru. And the Guru taught in no other way than: thus it is and thus it shall be done. The difference in our Western civilization is that an appeal is always made to the free spiritual activity of the human being, so that he is fully aware of what he is doing. He also has insight into how inspiration arises. If with the powers of healthy human intelligence we have grasped how physical illness and spiritual illness work - and the things I have told you today can be understood by healthy human intelligence - if we go on to realize what we should achieve in meditation, we have reached, with the powers of healthy human intelligence, the boundary of what can be attained. Healthy human intelligence can acquire everything that proceeds from Anthroposophy."¹²

Saturday / Saturn

In his course on pastoral medicine Rudolf Steiner summarized the physician's meditative path in its connection with the inner path of the priest. The pastoral medicine mantram arising from this connects the work of physician and priest with the threefold divinity. Here Christ, as "*Verus Mercurius*" leads downwards into the realm of the elements and death, to the divine Father, and upwards to the Holy Spirit, so as to help human beings, wandering on their misguided ways, towards freedom. Guilt and destiny, knowledge and transformation become comprehensible in their reciprocal influences and reveal the sources of illness and health:

I will go the path,
Which dissolves the elements into process
And leads me downwards to the Father
Who sends the illness as balance to karma.
And leads me upwards to the Spirit
Who guides the soul in error to attainment of freedom.
Christ leads downwards and upwards
Harmoniously creating Spirit-Man in earthly man.

Rudolf Steiner¹³

Developing a therapeutic-pedagogical inner attitude

Rudolf Steiner also included educators in the meditative path for physicians and therapists. He referred to education as "quiet healing", that is, the consistent support of healthy development. Seen like this, education and curative education, as instruments of prevention and developmental insight, also belong to the task area of physicians, nurses and therapists. Here, above all, we are concerned with the attitude that imbues every human and especially every educational-therapeutic encounter. Mystery knowledge from times when the profession of priest, physician and teacher were still one can then be understood anew, as Steiner summarizes in these words:

Once in olden times
There lived in the souls of the Initiates
Powerfully the thought

That by nature every person is ill
And Education was seen
As the healing process
Which brought to the child
As he matured
Health for life's fulfilled Humanity.

Rudolf Steiner¹⁴

This verse resounds in harmony with the core meditation from the *Curative Education Course*, which Steiner introduced as the so-called point-circle-meditation.¹⁵ This exercise is at the same time the best protection for overcoming ahrimanicly inspired vanity living unconsciously in the will, which works counter to a therapeutically effective attitude: "Vanity is an omnipresent factor underlying the youth movement. It is not so much due to bad manners of some kind than to something that no doubt necessitates it: the will necessitates a strong development of inner capacities, and thus, through ahrimanic influences, vanity simply surfaces to a high degree [...]. This is why we so often see people talking in general about missions and great tasks, but this is accompanied by a disinclination to enter into the small, specific details that are required for this."¹⁶

Notes

- 1 Steiner, R.: *Mantrische Sprüche. Seelenübungen*, vol. II. Rudolf Steiner Verlag 1999, p. 296. Translator unknown (vol. GA 268).
- 2 Steiner, R.: *Course for Young Doctors*, Mercury Press 1994, p. 52, lecture 4, Dornach, January 5, 1924. Translator unknown (vol. GA 316).
- 3 Ibid., p. 108 ff, eighth lecture, Dornach, January 9, 1924. Translator unknown.
- 4 Steiner, R.: *Mysterienstätten des Mittelalters*. Rudolf Steiner Verlag 1991, p. 71, lecture 5, January 12, 1924 (vol. GA 233a).
- 5 Steiner, R.: *Course for Young Doctors*, Mercury Press 1994, p. 180, lecture 4, Dornach, April 24, 1924. Translator unknown (vol. GA 316).
- 6 See also Steiner, R.: *Occult Science*. Rudolf Steiner Press 2011 (vol. GA 13).
- 7 Steiner, R.: *Course for Young Doctors*, Mercury Press 1994, p. 152 ff. lecture 3, Dornach, April 23, 1924 (vol. GA 316).
- 8 Ibid, p. 158 ff. lecture 5, Dornach, April 25, 1924.
- 9 Ibid, p. 159 ff., translator unknown.
- 10 Ibid, p. 187 ff.
- 11 Steiner, R.: *Mantrische Sprüche. Seelenübungen*, vol. II. Rudolf Steiner Verlag 1999, p. 306. Meditation translated by Astrid Schmitt-Stegmann (vol. GA 268).
- 12 Steiner, R.: *Course for Young Doctors*, Mercury Press 1994, p. 196, lecture 5, April 25, 1924 (vol. GA 316).
- 13 Steiner, R.: *Mantrische Sprüche. Seelenübungen*, vol. II. Rudolf Steiner Verlag 1999, p. 317 (vol. GA 268).
- 14 Ibid., p. 304.
- 15 Steiner, R.: *Education for Social Needs. The Curative Education Course*. Rudolf Steiner Press 2015. Lecture 10, Dornach, July 5, 1924 (vol. GA 317).
- 16 Ibid.