

The Lectures of Rudolf Steiner

Illusory Illness and The Feverish Pursuit of Health

GA 56

Illusory Illness

The Feverish Pursuit of Health

Illusory Illness

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In the course of his life man finds himself set between two powers. There is the current of events, the steady flow of facts, around him that make the most varied impression on him. Opposed to this stands man's own power within his inner being. One need consider life but superficially to have it dawn upon one that man must find a necessary balance between the forces and facts that storm in from all sides, and what unfolds in his inner life. When in his everyday life the human being has taken in impression upon impression, then he yearns to be alone, to collect and compose his soul. He feels that only in the right balancing of outer and inner will he find salvation in life.

A penetrating aphorism of Goethe expresses this for the depths and breadth of life, indeed, as the very riddle of being:

*For every force sweeps outward into space
To live and work; here, there and everywhere;
While on the other hand the teeming world
From every side confines and takes away!
Between the inner strife and outer conflict
The spirit hears a word slow comprehended:*

*From powers that fetter every living being
That man is free who overcomes himself.*

—*The Secrets*

In these last two lines of Goethe lies life-wisdom. To the inner being of man that moves forward stormily, to this potentiality in him that is continually developing and unfolding, there stands opposed what approaches us from the outside. When we overcome ourselves, we find a balance. These we can take as themes for the considerations that will occupy us here. Both themes belong together. First, we will devote ourselves to the subject of illusory illness, and, as a necessary complement, then consider the feverish pursuit of health.

Only in the course of our considerations can these words be justified. They lead us into the spiritual streams of the present and into that with which spiritual science confronts them, with which spiritual science has to set itself as a task against them.

In connection with the words, "illusory illness," men think at first of the fact that someone really feels pain and discomfort based on a more or less self-induced illness. Right, here we have an area into which spiritual science, with its cultural calling, must step. Important things depend on this activity. Before we go into detail about what spiritual science has to say by way of comment on this, let us observe some pictures out of the life of the present. All the illustrative material I shall present is taken from life.

On one of my journeys (it was on the way from Rostock to Berlin) there were two other persons in my compartment, a lady and a gentleman,, who soon began conversing. The gentleman behaved in a remarkable way. After but a few words he laid himself out on the seat and said that only so positioned could he bear living. The lady recounted how she came from east of where they were and had been to a Baltic spa. The day before she had been struck with home-sickness and had decided to go home. Then she burst into tears. Because of the lady's crying the gentleman hit upon the idea of recounting the story of his health.

"I suffer from many illnesses and journey from sanitarium to sanitarium without finding health."

Whereupon the lady replied, "I, too, understand much about illness. Many people in my homeland thank me for their health and life."

The gentleman told of one of his numerous illnesses, whereupon the lady, from her heart's wide knowledge, gave him a prescription that the man wrote down. After a few minutes the second illness was recounted, etc., until, beaming, he had written down thirteen prescriptions. The gentleman had but one sorrow.

"We'll be arriving in Berlin at nine. Will it still be possible to have the prescriptions filled?"

The lady comforted him saying that it would still be possible. Strangely enough, it never occurred to the gentleman that the lady herself was ill. The lady remarked further that yes, she had much sympathy, and she counted up her own illnesses and told of all the places to which she had gone to be healed. The gentleman recommended a book by Lahmann to her. Thereupon she told of her second illness and the second brochure was recommended, until she had noted the titles of five or six brochures she would buy the next day. Finally, she wrote down Lahmann's address. Meanwhile they had arrived in Berlin. Each had written down the other's recommendations and gone off satisfied.

Whoever observed these people with an eye for the situation under consideration soon saw that there was something not quite right about the lady. As for the man, he only lacked the will to be healthy. Had he summoned the will to be healthy, he would have been in good health. Here we have something symptomatic of what meets us frequently at present, and the scrutinizing glance will be able to pass from this picture to another.

Were we to travel in mountainous country, we would see old fortresses, decaying castles, etc., that remind us of old times when striving for spirit strength existed or where outer power ruled. These fortresses have fallen into ruins, but everywhere in the vicinity of these monuments to power one can see sanitariums, one near the other. This picture presented itself to me recently in an area especially

rich in these institutions, when I found it necessary to stop at such a sanitarium for a short time. The "inmates" were just taking their midday meal. The conviction I gained was that of the hundreds there, no one really needed the sanitarium life.

Let us now move on to the more intimate pictures that we find in the accounts of thoughtful present-day physicians. Fortunately, there are some doctors who concern themselves also with the soul in the body. I choose an example by a doctor who would surely look upon everything theosophical as madness. His kind are most surely those who are without doubt not to be influenced by what spiritual science may have to say. Such a prominent physician has recorded many different cases of people such as those in the train I mentioned only as a specially grotesque example. This physician was called to attend a girl who showed all the symptoms of meningitis. But the physician had a good clinical sense. When he was alone with her he questioned her with such questions as were suitable under these circumstances, but all his questions elicited no pertinent answers. Finally, it came out that the young lady was to leave school. In the following year, however, there were to be especially interesting lectures that she wanted to hear. Since all the family opposed her wish to remain in school, she fell ill. The physician said, "I shall intervene that you may still remain in school, but you must get up out of bed immediately and come to the table." This she did. After a few minutes the young lady appeared at the table and was no longer ill.

Let's take another example. Another physician, a skillful one and well-known, for whom I have always had a certain regard, had to perform a knee operation. The patient's brother was present. During the operation the knee cracked, whereupon the brother suffered excruciating pain. The operation went off well, but the brother became ill. A whole year went by before he was again well.

Thus one can see what power fantasy and perverted imagination can have on the soul, and how, from out of the soul, imitations of disease resembling a truly genuine disease picture can arise. But the physician may not go too far in this. The one just mentioned was very skillful. He did not allow himself to be deceived by accepting that matters forever continue as they first appear. A lady came to him one time who, since her husband's death, was suffering unbearable pain in her knee. She had been treated by many doctors who always came to the conclusion that her sickness was associated with soul aspects, had to do with the impact of her husband's death upon her. Not that the physician of healthy outlook sought for some soul aberration. He found that in this case, a large corn on the heel was the provocation. After the operation he sent the lady to convalesce at Gastein in order not to appear to expose his colleagues too much.

So now we see the situation illumined by a variety of pictures. You see how strongly the illusion, the soul picture, can react on the bodily organism. One could well say that in this instance it is not a question of actual illness, but of illusory illness. Whoever has come to the realization, however, that **everything corporeal is the expression of spirit**, that **everything that meets our senses is an expression of the spirit**, will not take the matter so lightly. Even in seemingly quite remote matters we find that it is often a question of soul influences on the body. The illusion, which at the beginning appears trivial and ridiculous, when it then turns into pains, often leads to the beginning of an actual illness, and often to further stages.

Such illusions are more than something to be disposed of with a mere shrug of the shoulders. If we are to penetrate more deeply into these occurrences, we must call up before the soul the oft-presented picture of the nature and being of man. To spiritual science, what the human being presents at first glance is only an outer aspect. The physical body is a member among other members of the human being that he has in common with all other beings around him. Beyond the physical body he has the body of etheric forces that penetrates the physical body, as is true for every living being. This ether body battles against the destruction of the physical body. The third member is

the astral body, the bearer of desire and apathy, joy and sorrow, passion and sensual appetites, of the lowest drives as well as of the highest ideals. This body man has in common with the animal world. That whereby man is the crown of creation, whereby he differentiates himself from all other beings, is his "I," his ego. We must consider these four members as constituting the whole man.

We must, however, be clear that all that makes itself visible to our eyes derives from the spirit. There is no material thing that does not have a spiritual basis.

Now for a more frequently-used analogy. A child shows us some ice. We say, "This is water in another form."

The child will then say, "You say that it is water but yet it *is* ice."

Whereupon we will say, "You do not know how water becomes ice."

So it is for him who does not know that **matter is condensed spirit**. For the student of spiritual science, however, everything visible is derived from the same realm as the astral body we carry in us. Etheric and physical body are successive condensation products of the astral body. Here is another picture: We have a mass of water and convert part of it into ice. Thus we have ice in water. So it is that the etheric and physical bodies are condensed out of the astral. The astral body is the part that has retained its original form.

Now, when something or other comes upon us, be it health or illness, we may then say that it is the expression of certain forces that we see in the astral body. Of course, we are speaking now only of illnesses that originate within, not of those that arise through outer influences, such as a fractured bone, an upset stomach, or a cut finger. We are speaking of those diseased conditions that spring from the human being's own nature, and we ask ourselves if there is not only an enduring connection between the astral and physical bodies, but also a more immediate connection between the inner soul events, desire and pain, and the physical condition of our bodies. May we say that in a measure, the outer health of the human being depends upon these or those feelings that he suffers through, these or those thoughts he experiences? We will be able herein to cast light upon important occurrences that should be valuable to people today.

The human being of our time has lost the capacity to rouse himself to the knowledge that the physical body is not his only body. It is not a question of what the human being believes theoretically, but it is a question of what the attitude in his innermost soul is to the higher members of his being. In order to penetrate into what is really involved, let us bring to mind the quarrel between Wagner and Carl Vogt, that is, the Vogt who wrote *Blind Faith and Science*. Wagner represented the spiritual viewpoint, while Vogt saw in man only a conglomeration of physical things, of atoms. For him, thoughts were but a precipitation of the brain, a blue vapor that arose from brain movements. At death, the substances ceased to develop this blue vapor of thoughts. To this Wagner replied in approximately such a way that one had to believe that if some parents or other had eight children, it followed that the parents' spirit divided itself into eight parts, one part going to each of the children. Thus Wagner pictured the spirit to himself in quite a material way, perhaps as many people do, as a mist formation. But it is a question of swinging oneself up with one's attitudes, impressions and feelings, in order really to grasp the spirit. **There may be many today who want none of this materialism, yet they grasp the spirit in a material way.** Even many theosophists think of spirit as finely-divided matter. Even in theosophy much timid materialism is hidden.

When it is impossible for someone to lift himself to spirit heights, after awhile there appears for such a person an inner desolation, an emptiness, a disbelief in anything that goes beyond matter. When this takes hold of the feelings, when this eats its way into all beliefs, into all feeling of the soul, when the human being looks out into the world and no longer has the capacity to be impressed by what is back of what he sees, there comes to light what gradually leads him to the crassest physical egoism in which his own body becomes evermore important to him, thus placing him ever further from Goethe's response:

*"From powers that fetter every living being
That man is free who overcomes himself!"*

At this juncture we come to an important aspect of spiritual science that will not be fully disclosed for some time unless spiritual science succeeds in enabling man to conquer himself. For if the human being continues to grasp with his intellect only what his senses perceive, then, as a result, there would follow for the human being's health something quite different from what would result were the human being to perceive in phenomena nothing but the spirit's sense expression. Materialistic thinking and spiritual scientific thinking have a great effect on the human being's inner life. Thus, the question of the significance of materialistic thinking and of spiritual scientific thinking have more than a theoretical meaning. As for the results of materialistic and spiritual scientific thinking, the one works to desolate, the other to imbue inwardly. Now, for the meaning of these effects on the human being let's take a simple example pertaining to sight. One becomes nearsighted if, during the period of early development, one lends oneself passively to impressions. If, however, one gives oneself actively to the impressions of things, then the eyes remain well. A man must develop productive power from within. Whatever provides him with the possibility of becoming the center of creativity and production is healthy. Unless he becomes creative from within outwards, his capacity for health will dry up and his whole being will be compressed by the outer impressions. To all impressions from the outside man must call up from his inner being a counter-force. This must also be supplemented by the reverse in that the human being must unfold an activity that shuts itself off from the outside, becomes invisible from the outside.

There are two soul experiences in which you need to steep yourselves. They will show you that the human being seeks an inner abundance that streams out, and also a center for his activity in the outer world. One should study these two feeling directions, for they lead us deep into man's illnesses. The one feeling is negative, anxiety; the other, positive, shame, but which also means something negative. Let us assume that you are confronting some event that stirs up anxiety and fear in you. If you consider this not only from the materialistic standpoint, but also include that of the astral body, then becoming pale will appear as an expression of energy-streams in the human being. Why does the soul affect the blood circulation in this way? Because the soul strives to create a will-center within itself in order to be able to function outwardly from it. It is actually a gathering of the blood to the center in order for it to be able to function outwardly from it. This is meant more or less as a picture. In the case of shame, things are reversed. We blush. The blood streams from within to the periphery. The feeling of shame points to circumstances that we would extinguish from visibility, because of which we would extinguish our ego. The human being wants to make his ego weaker and weaker so that it is no longer perceptible from the outside. At this point he needs something in order to lose himself, to dissolve into the All, into the World Soul, or, if you will, into the environment. Thus, what we call shame is loath to, indeed, does not want to, become visible from the outside.

In the expressions of shame and anxiety you have a polarity that indicates significant conditions of the etheric and astral bodies. These are two instances in which forces of the astral body become outwardly visible. Anxiety and shame express themselves in bodily conditions. If you reflect on this, you will realize that all soul happenings can have an effect on the happenings of the organism. This is true as taught by spiritual science. There is a connection, even if the human being is at first not conscious of it.

Let us consider the phenomenon that the abstract thoughts of today have the least imaginable effect on the organism. What we learn in our abstract sciences has the least imaginable effect on our body. Its principle is to perceive what we see, to transform the perception into the intellectual concepts. This science will not admit that the human being has inner creative wisdom, that the soul can produce from out of itself something about the world. While perceiving outwardly, the soul does not confront outer impressions with an inner creative energy. The scientist is not for discovering things out of himself. When we reflect on how deeply rooted is the belief of the human being in his own incapacity to learn out of himself, then we may realize that this is the point of departure for the desolating effect of a knowing that attaches itself only to the outer.

What remedy is there in this situation for humanity if inner investigation for wisdom and truth, the inner creativity of the spirit, is to companion outer science? The remedy is to be found in true spiritual science. Herewith are the springs opened through which the human being, out of himself, has the capacity to develop his perception of what lies behind things. Some people are oppressed by things. But whoever sees what no outer perception can receive, whoever receives this, creates the counterpart to outer perceptions that is necessary for the complete healing of soul and body. This healing of the soul cannot be brought about by abstract theories and thoughts. These are too dull and inadequate. The effect is powerful, however, when concept is transmitted into picture. How is this to be understood? This can best be learned from thinking about what is called evolution. You will hear it said that there were at first the simplest of living beings that became ever more complicated until man came to be. These are again only abstract, dull, inadequate concepts. This thinking is to be found in many theosophical teachings about evolution. They begin with the logos and continue in purely abstract concepts such as evolution, involution, etc. This is too weak in its effect upon the organism. What lies in the soul will become strong if one considers what has developed since the fourteenth century. Here you have a picture, an imagination that is set before the soul. Let me outline this again.

In the past the pupil was told, "Look well at the plant and then place the human being beside it and compare them. The head may not be compared with the blossom, and the feet with the root. (Even Darwin, the reformer of natural science, did not do this.) The root corresponds to the head of the human being; he is an upside-down plant. (Spiritual science has always said this.) What the plant in its innocence allows to be kissed by the sunbeams so that the new plant can be born therefrom, this takes a reversed direction in man in his chastity directed towards the central point of the earth. The animal stands in the middle, between the two. The animal is turned halfway to the plant."

Plato, in his summing up, says about what lives in plant, animal and human being, "The world soul is crucified on the cross of the world body." The world soul, which streams through plant, animal and human being, is crucified on the world body. Thus has the cross always been explained by spiritual science.

Now the pupil who was led forward to this significant image was told, "You see how the human being has developed himself from the dull consciousness of the plant, beyond the consciousness of the animal and has found his self-consciousness. In the sleeping human being we have a state of being that has the same existence value as the plant. Because the human being has permeated the

pure, innocent plant matter with his body of desires, he has risen higher, but, in a certain sense, has descended lower. Otherwise, he would not have been able to acquire his high ego consciousness. Now he must again transform his astral nature. In the future the human being will have an organ free of passion, like the flower's chalice."

It was then pointed out to the pupil that a time would come when the human being would bring forth his life free of passion. This was presented in the Grail Schools in the image of the Holy Grail. Here you have evolution presented not in thoughts, but in a picture, in an imagination.

So it would be possible to transmute into pictures what has been given us only in abstract concepts. Thereby we would be accomplishing much. When one allows this pregnant ideal of evolution to rise before one, up into the development of the imagination of the Holy Grail, then one has food and nourishment for more than just one's power of judgment. Then, not only does the rational understanding cling to it, but also the full being of feeling twines around it. **You tremble before the great world-secret when you see the development of the world in truth**, and receive it in such imaginations. Then these imaginations work lawfully upon the organism, harmonizing it. Abstract thoughts are without effect.

These imaginations, however, work as health-bringing, inner impulses. Imaginations bring about effects, and if these be true world-pictures, imaginations, they work in a health-bringing way. When the human being transforms what he sees outwardly into pictures, then he frees himself from his inner being. Then does the storm resolve itself into a harmony, and he is able to overcome the power that binds all beings. Then will he be able to relate himself to everything that comes his way. He streams out. Through his feelings he grows into union with the world. His inner self is widened to a spiritual universe. In the moment when the human being has no possibility of forming these inner imaginations, then all his forces stream inwards and he clings fast to his ego.

This is the mysterious reason for what meets us in many of our contemporaries. Human beings have forsaken religion's old form and now they are turned back on themselves. They live ever more in themselves, ever more only with themselves. The less possibility the human being has of dissolving into the universal world being, the more he perceives what happens in his organism. This is the cause of false feelings of anxiety and of illusions of illness. The image reacts out of the soul upon the organism; healthy trends in the body are affected by true images. False images, however, also leave their imprint, giving rise to what meets us as soul disturbances, which later become bodily disturbances. Here we have the true basis that finally leads to illusory illness. Whoever closes himself off from the great world relationships will not be able to dismiss what comes toward him. On the other hand, it is impossible for the one who has been impressed by the all-embracing imaginations to let himself be deceived by false images. He would not, for example, as is often the case, think he detected an induction apparatus current pass through his body when no current was present.

Every image that does not find a place in the overall general nexus, that functions as a one-sided, everyday image, is at the same time an illness-inducing image. It is only if the human being always looks up from the single, the lone, to the great secrets of the universe, that he thereby corrects what must be corrected. For what really works upon the soul is a strong force. What emerges in the course of cultural development is a fact not to be overlooked. Today we limit ourselves to our instincts about health. Let us consider tragedy from this point of view. The ancient Greeks knew that what I am about to say is true, that the human being watches tragedy, lives with its suffering, is seized by its impressions, gripped by them, but by the time it is over, he knows that the hero has won out over the suffering and that the human being can overcome the suffering of the world. It is through his living with suffering and overcoming it that he becomes healthy. Turning one's gaze inward makes for

sickness. To express what lives within one in an image outside makes for health. Thus it is that Aristotle would have tragedy presented to show how the protagonist goes through suffering and fear so that the human being is healed of pain and fear.

This has far-reaching effects. The spiritual scientist can tell you wherefore the ancient peoples brought fairy tale and legend pictures before the soul of the human being. Pictures were presented to him, pictures from which he should turn away his inward gazing. The blood flowing in fairy tales is a healthy educational means. Whoever can so look at myths will be able to see much. When, for example, the human being outwardly sees revenge in a picture, when he sees in outer picture what he should give up, the result is that he overcomes it. Deep, deep wisdom lies in the most bloodthirsty fairy tales. Our inner harmony is disturbed if we forever stand gaping into our souls. We become healthy in soul when we look into the All, into the Cosmos. But one must know which images are needed. Consider a melancholic person, an hypochondriac, who simply cannot free himself from certain happenings. One would like to bring some gaiety into his soul with gay music, etc., but one brings forth the opposite, gloom, even if it does not appear so at the moment. The deeper ground of his soul finds it flat and dreary, even if he does not admit to this. Serious pictures are necessary, even if they unnerve one at first.

Thus you see that a quite definite way of dealing with the soul can arise. It is not possible to get at illusory illness through a single means. It rests on the materialism of our time, on the lack of creativity. Spurious, baseless anxiety, all the feelings that express the distorted soul-balance in melancholy, etc., are explained by a deeper observation of the connection of things. Through this the means of healing are also found. It would just never be possible for one who continually fathomed the connection of things not to be released from his ego. In cases where the ego is not released there is some kind of provocation, and this is exaggerated. For example, someone bumped his knee on the edge of the table. He lacked the large, asserting ideas and thus he could not rid himself of the pain. The pain grew worse. The doctor was called and he said to do this and that. Then suddenly the person felt the pain in the other knee. Then his elbow became painful, etc., until finally he could no longer move his legs or hands — all because he bumped his knee. There may be reasons that the attention is directed to a particular point, but there are also possibilities present that could bring about a balance. The human being finds the balance in his ever more difficult life only if he allows spiritual science to work upon him. Then he will find himself armed against the cultural influences.

We can, however, also find outer causes for lack of creativity. The facts speak loudly. Observe the animals that in our culture are transplanted into captivity. They become sick, they who in the outside world would never become sick. This arises because of the strong influences upon man and animal that flow from the outer environment. The animal cannot develop a counter-force because his development is terminated. **Through civilization the human being also comes to decadence if he is unable to counter outer influences with creative force. He must reshape and transform the influences by inner activity. Then it is even possible that these influences can be used by the human being for higher development. The person who elaborates and creates a radical theory of materialism is healthy because he creates from within outwards. But the followers of the theory waste away because they bring forth no creative force of their own.**

If you read books of spiritual science, there is nothing that you gain unless you inwardly recreate them for yourselves. Then your activity becomes an inner cooperative creativity. If this be not the case, then it is not studying of spiritual scientific books as it is meant to be. It depends upon developing the feeling for the forces that surge forward, the forces that would receive the outer world. It depends upon finding the balance between outer impressions and inner creativity. Men must free themselves from the outer strife in the world so that it does not make itself ever more noticeable

and oppressive. We must carry out the counter-thrust. The outer impression must inwardly experience the counter-thrust. Then we become free of it; otherwise, it will continue to turn us back upon ourselves over and over again. If we be always watchful only of our inner life, then there arises before our souls a picture of suffering. If we achieve an expression of balance between outer forces and inner forces that indefatigably would go forward, then we amalgamate with the outer world.

So do we acquaint ourselves in a deeper sense with illusory illness as a phenomenon today. Our point of departure was that spiritual science should be a means of healing so that the human being is freed from himself and thus from every binding power. For every binding power makes for illness. Only in this way do we become clear about the deep core of Goethe's verse:

*For every force sweeps outward into space
To live and work; here, there and everywhere;
While on the other hand the teeming world
From every side confines and takes away!
Between the inner strife and outer conflict
The spirit hears a word slow comprehended:*

*From powers that fetter every living being
That man is free who overcomes himself.*

The Feverish Pursuit of Health

5 December 1907, Munich

Health is something for which every man naturally longs. We may say this longing for health derives indeed not only from egotistic feelings and wishes, but also from the justified longing for work. We owe thanks for our capacity to work, for the possibility of becoming effective in the world, to our health. Hence, it is that we treasure health as a quite special beneficence. Indeed, there lies in this way of thinking about health something of the highest significance for its pursuit. In a certain way there is contained therein the secret of the particular circumstances under which health becomes at all worth pursuing. That the pursuit of health should only under certain circumstances be worthwhile might appear unusual. Our considerations today, however, should disclose that health belongs to those virtues that most readily become a reality in us if we pursue them not for their own sake, but for another's. That this does not always happen today can be taught us if we but look out into our present surrounding world.

However remarkable it may be when speaking of the feverish pursuit of health, the feverish insistence upon health, yet it is possible today for many people to make their own observations about it. With what means, in what countless ways, do most people today press towards health! Everywhere we find a hurried pursuit of health. We may travel through regions in which old castles and ruins tell us of monks and knights who once could call strength of spirit and of body their own. Today they have fallen into decay and replacing them in these same regions we find sanitarium. Was

there ever in any time of world evolution such a variety of special efforts to achieve health, to struggle through to health by natural ways of living, by water- or aero-healing methods? People are sent for air and sun baths.

Once an acquaintance of mine who was on his way to a sanitarium came to me during the first half of summer. It had been with much difficulty that he managed to get four weeks' vacation, which he planned to spend there. Of course, it seemed to be the best that could happen to a person, to stay for a time, more or less satisfying, in a sanitarium. Hence I had no wish to explain the futility of his plan and thus deprive him of all hope. On his return journey he came again to me. He brought a little book along in which was written all he was supposed to have accomplished during those four weeks contemplating his organism. Again one could not deprive him of his joy, but, on the tip of one's tongue lay the question, "Do tell me, when have you been more driven? During the whole year at work or during those four weeks during which you were shoved from warmth to cold, from dryness to dampness, and were scrubbed with all those brushes?"

The worst part of it was that after some weeks he said to me, "This cure has helped me as little as all the others in the last thirty years." He had tried something different each summer. Whoever cared for this person could well look upon his feverish search for health in a somewhat sympathetic way.

How many people today run to mesmerizers and spiritual healers? How many writings there are on "Harmony With the Infinite" and the like! In short, the feverish pursuit of health is something that lives in our time. Now, one might raise another question. "Are these people actually sick?" Well, of course, something is probably wrong with them, but is there a chance that they will attain health through all these things?

Especially among ancient people an age-old saying remains even today. One says so frequently that what the simple person gets from such sayings often may contain something good, but just as often it is something false. So it is with the saying, "There are many illnesses, but only one state of health." This is foolish. There are as many states of health as there are human beings. For each human being his individual health. What this says is that all general standard prescriptions holding that this or that is healthy for the human being are nonsense. The very part of humanity that is overcome by the feverish pursuit of health suffers most from the general prescriptions for health. Among them are those who believe that there could be something generally tagged as health, that if one does thus and so, that it would be healthy. It is most incredible that there is no realization that a sun bath can be healthy for a person, but that this may not be applied in general. It could be quite harmful for another. Generally, this is admitted but there is no following through in particular instances. We must make it clear to ourselves that health is a quite relative concept, something that is liable to a continuing process of change, especially for the human being, who is the most complicated being on the earth. We need but look into spiritual science. Then shall we penetrate deeply into human nature and recognize how changeable what we call health is. In reality, one forgets almost entirely today that upon which so much value is laid in material aspects. One forgets that the human being is in the throes of development.

What is meant by, "The human being is undergoing development?" Again it is necessary to refer to the being of man. The physical body is only a part of the human entity. This he has in common with all lifeless nature. But he has as second member the etheric or life body, which he has in common only with what is life-imbued. This member wages a continuing battle against everything that would destroy the physical body. Were the etheric body to withdraw from the physical body, in that moment the physical body would become a corpse. The third member is the astral body, which he has in common with animals, the bearer of desires and sorrow, of every feeling and representation, of joy

and pain, the so-called consciousness body. The fourth part is his ego, the central point of his being, that makes of him the crown of creation. The ego transforms the three bodies through development out of the central point of the human being.

Let us consider an uneducated savage, an average man, or a highly educated idealist. The savage is still slave to his passions. The average man refines his urges. He denies himself the satisfaction of certain urges and sets in their place legal concepts or high religious ideals, that is, he remodels his astral body from out his ego. As a result the astral body now has two members. The one still has the form that exists in the savage, but the other part has been transformed into spirit self or manas. Through impressions from art or great impressions from founders of religion man works on his ether body and creates buddhi or life spirit. The physical body also can be transformed into Atma, Spirit Self, [In other lectures, Rudolf Steiner refers to "Atma" as "Spirit-man." – e.Ed.] if a person devotes himself to the practice of certain spiritual-scientific exercises. Thus, the human being works unconsciously or consciously on his three bodies.

Were we able to look far, far back into the early development of man, we would find everywhere primitive cultural conditions, simple modes of life. Everything that those early people had in the way of appliances to satisfy their spiritual and bodily needs, their way of life, was simple. Everything, everything evolves, and within evolution the human being develops himself. This is most important. Imagine as vividly as you can a primitive man who grinds his grain to flour between stones, and picture to yourself the other things surrounding this individual. Compare him with a man of more recent cultural times. What surrounds this modern person, what does he see from morning until evening? He takes in the frightful impressions of the noisy big city, of street cars, buses and the like. We must then understand how evolution proceeds. We must carry over the insight we gain concerning simple things into the cultural process.

Goethe made the following statement, "The eye was fashioned by the light, for the light." If we had no eyes, we could not see colors or light. Whence have we eyes? Goethe also said that out of undifferentiated organs the light drew forth eyes. So also is the ear formed by tone, the sense of warmth by warmth. The human being is formed by that which in the whole world spreads itself around him. Just as the eyes owe their existence to the light, so do other delicate structures owe their existence to what surrounds man. The simple primitive world is the dark chamber that still holds back many organs. What light is for the undifferentiated organs out of which the eye developed itself, the environment is for primitive humanity. Things work quite differently upon man in his present mode of living; he cannot turn back to the primitive conditions of culture. Rather is it so that an ever more intense, stronger spiritual light has been effective around him that has called forth the new.

We are able to realize the meaning of this transforming cultural process if we picture to ourselves how the being fares who is also subject to this influence but cannot go along with the transformation. Here we have the condition of the animals. They are differently structured from men. When we look at the animal as it appears in the physical world, we find that it has its physical body, its etheric body and its astral body in the physical world, but it has no ego in the physical world. Hence, the animals are powerless on the physical plane to undergo transformation of the three bodies, and cannot adapt themselves to a new environment. Two days ago we considered wild animals in captivity, how, out in the wilderness certain animals never have tuberculosis, tooth decay, -etc., but do in captivity. A whole series of decadent appearances show up in captivity or under other circumstances.

During the cultural process, men are continually subject to other conditions. This is the nature of culture. Otherwise, there would be no development, no history of human beings. What we observed as experiments with animals as to the effect on the physical body appears as the opposite in men. Man, because he has an ego, has the capacity of inwardly digesting the impressions that storm in

upon him from our culture. He is inwardly active, first adapts his astral body to the changed conditions and then reorganizes it. Thus, as he keeps evolving, he comes to higher cultures and always receives new impressions. At first these express themselves in feelings and perceptions. Were he now to remain passive, inactive, were there no activity stirred up in him, no creativity, then he would become stunted and sick as does the animal. This it is that distinguishes the human being, that he can adapt himself and, from out the astral body, gradually change the etheric and physical bodies. He must be inwardly up to this transformation, however, otherwise there is no adjustment of the balance between what comes to him from the outside and what counters it from within. A man would be crushed by the impressions from outside as the animal in a cage is crushed by them because it has no inner creativity. But man has his inner activity. Against the spiritual lights around him, he must be able to set something, in a sense, to counter with eyes, with seeing.

Whatever turns out as a disharmony between impressions from the outside and the inner life is unhealthy. It is in the big cities that we can see what happens when impressions from the outside grow ever more powerful. When we tear along faster and faster, when we must let rumbling sounds and hurrying people go by us without taking a stance, without countering them — this is unhealthy. As regards this position towards the outside, the intellect is the least important, but what is important depends upon whether our feelings, our soul, indeed, our living bodies, can take a position towards it. This we will understand rightly through the consideration of a definite illness that appears especially in our time, and that did not occur earlier. A person not accustomed to absorb much, one poor in soul, is brought up against all kinds of impressions so that he finds himself standing before a quite incomprehensible outer world. This is the case with many feminine natures. Their inner being is too weak, too little organized to digest it all. But we find this condition also in many masculine persons. The consequences result in the illnesses of hysteria. Everything connected with hysteria is derived from this imbalance.

Another form of illness takes hold when our lives bring us to the position of wanting to understand too much of what is set before us in the outer world. It is mostly the case with men who suffer with causality illness. One accustoms oneself always to ask, "Why? why? why? why?" It is even said that the human being must be the never-resting causality animal. Today, because we are too polite, we may no longer give the idle questioner the answer that a founder of religion gave. When he was asked, "What did God do before the creation of the world" he answered, "He cut rods for those who ask useless questions." This is exactly the opposite condition of the hysterical one. Here the restless longing for the solving of enigmas is too great. This is only a symptom of an inner attitude. The one who never wearies of always asking, "Why?" has a different constitution from other people. He gives signs of a different inner working of spiritual and bodily functions from the person who asks "Why" only on outer provocation. This leads to all hypochondriacal conditions, from the lightest case to the deepest illusory illness. So it is that the cultural process affects human beings. Man must above all have an open mind in order always to be able to digest what comes towards him. Now we can also make it clear to ourselves why so many people have the urge to shed this culture, to have done with this life. They are no longer up to what presses in upon them. They strive to get out. These are always weak natures who do not know how to counter the outer impressions with a mighty inner response.

Thus it is that we cannot speak today in clichés as regards health just because life itself is so manifold. The one person stands here, the other there. Because what has developed in the human being has developed in a certain sense through the outer world, each has his own health. This is why we must make the human being capable of understanding his environment, even to the very functions of the body. For the man who is born into circumstances in which light muscles and nerves are necessary, it would indeed be foolish to develop heavy muscles. Where does the gauge for the successful developing of the human being lie? It lies within the human being. As with money, so it is

with health. When we go after money in order to have it for benevolent purposes, then it is something wholesome, something good. Going after money may not be condemned, for it is something that enables us to forward the cultural process. If we go after money for money's sake, then it is absurd, laughable. It is the same with health. If we go after health for health's sake, then the striving has no significance. If we put ourselves out for health for what we can achieve through our health, then the effort for the sake of health is justified. Whoever would acquire money should first make it clear to himself how much of it he needs. Then he should press forward for it. Whoever yearns for health must look into the easily misunderstood words like comfort, love of life, enjoyment of life, and what could be meant with them. Joy of life, satisfaction in life, love of life are present in savages. In the human being in whom outer and inner life are in harmony, in the harmoniously developed man, conditions must be such that if there is discomfort, if there is this or that hurt of body or of soul, this feeling of discomfort must be seen as some sort of illness, as a disharmony. Hence it is important in all education, in all public work, not to carry on routinely, but rather out of the expanse of a cultural view, so that joy and satisfaction in life are possible.

It is curious that what has just been said has been said by a representative of spiritual science. Yes, so says spiritual science whom people reproach for striving for asceticism. Someone comes along who takes great pleasure in nightly visits to the girlie shows or in downing his eight glasses of beer. Then he encounters people who take joy in something on a higher level. So he remarks that they punish themselves. No, they would punish themselves were they to sit with him in the music hall. Whoever enjoys the girlie shows and such belongs there, and it would be absurd to deprive him of the enjoyment. It is healthy only to take away his taste for it.

One should work to ennoble one's pleasures, one's gratifications in life. It is not so that anthroposophists come together because they suffer when talking about higher worlds, but rather because it is their heart's deepest enjoyment. It would be the most terrible deprivation for them to sit down and play poker. They are completely full of the joy of life in every fiber of their beings.

There is no point in saying, even concerning health, that one should do thus and so. The point is to provide joy and satisfaction in life. Indeed, the spiritual scientist in this case is quite the epicure of life. How is this to be conferred upon health? We must be clear about this, that when we give someone a rule about health, we must aim at what gives joy, bliss and pleasure to his astral body. For by the astral body the other members are affected. This is more easily said than done.

There are, for example, even those among the theosophists who mortify their flesh by no longer eating any meat. Should these be people who still hanker for meat, then must this mortification be seen at best as a preparation for a later condition. There comes, however, a point at which a person may have such a relation with his environment that it becomes impossible for him to eat meat. A physician who was also of those who ate no meat, not because he was a theosophist, but because he considered this way of life healthy, was asked by a friend why he partook of no meat. He countered with the question, "Why don't you eat horse or cat meat?" Of course, the friend had to say that they disgusted him, although he ate meat of pig or cow, etc. To the physician all meat was disgusting.

Only then, when the inner subjective conditions correspond to the objective fact, has the moment come when the outer fact has a healthy effect. We must be inwardly up to the outer facts. This is expressed by the words, "comfortable feeling," which we may not use lightly, but rather in its dignified meaning of harmonious concordance of our inner forces. Happiness and joy and delight and satisfaction, which are the foundation for a healthy life, always spring from the same foundation, from the feelings of an inner life that attend creativity, inner activity. Happy is the human being when he can be active. Of course, this activity is not to be understood as coarse activity.

Why does love make the human being happy? It is an activity we often do not see as such because it moves from within out, embracing the other one. With it we let our inner being flow out. Hence love's healing and blessing of life. Creativity may be of the most intimate nature; it does not have to become tumultuously visible. When someone is hunched over a book and the impressions from it depress him, overwhelm him, he will gradually become depressed. When, however, the reading of a book brings pictures to mind, then there is a creative activity that makes for happiness. It is something quite similar to becoming pale when one is anxious about coming events. Then the blood flows inwards in order to strengthen us so that what comes at us from the outside can find a counter-balance within. With the feeling of anxiety inner activity is alerted to outer activity. Becoming aware of an inner activity is healing. Had the human being been able to feel the activity of the inner formation in the arising of the eyes out of the undifferentiated basic organ, then he would have perceived a feeling of well-being. He was not conscious, however, of that happening.

Instead of bringing a worn-out human being to a sanitarium, it were far better to bring him into an environment where he would be happy, at first soul-happy, but also physically happy. When you put a human being into an environment of joy, in which with each step he takes an inner feeling of joy awakes, that it is which will make him healthy, when, for example, he sees sunbeams streaming through the trees and perceives the colors and scents of flowers. This, however, a person must himself be able to feel, so that he himself can take the problem of his health in hand. Every step should stir him to inner activity. Paracelsus gave us the beautiful saying, "It is best that everyone should be himself, by himself, and no one else." It is already a limitation of what makes us healthy if we must first go to another person. Here we are confronted with outer impressions that for a short while appear to help, but finally lead to hysteria.

When one considers the problem so, one comes upon other healthy thoughts. There are people and doctors today, especially "lay doctors," who battle against doctors. Medicine does, indeed, need to be reformed, but this cannot come about through these battles. Rather must facts of spiritual science themselves reach into science. Spiritual science exists, but not to further dilettantism. There are people today who have the itch to cure others. It is, of course, easy to find this or that illness in a person. So somebody finds this or that organ in a person different from the way it appears in another. Or a person does not breathe as the one possessed with the curing fever thinks all people should breathe. So for this a cure gets invented. Shocking, most shocking! For it is not at all a matter of directing one's efforts at a routine concept of health. It is easy to say that this and that do not make for health. Consider someone who has lost one of his legs. He is sick, certainly sicker than one who breathes irregularly, whose lungs are affected. It is not a question of healing this person. It would be foolish to say, "One must see to it that this person gets a leg again!" Just try to get him to grow another leg! What really matters is that life for his person be made as bearable as possible.

This is so in gross, but also in more subtle conditions. It is a fact that one can find a small flaw in each human being. Also, what often matters here is not to clear up the flaw, but rather, despite the human being's flaw, to make his life as bearable as possible. Think of a plant, the stem of which is wounded. The tissues and the bark grow around the wound. So is it also with human beings. The forces of nature maintain life as they grow around the flaw. Especially lay doctors fall victim to the error of wanting to cure everything. They would like to cultivate one kind of health for all human beings. There is as little of the one kind of health as there is one kind of normal human being. Not only are illnesses individual, but also healths. The best we can give to the human being, be we physician or counselor, is, to give him the firm frame of mind that he feels himself comfortable when he is healthy, uncomfortable when he is sick. Today this is not at all so easy in our circumstances. He who understands the matter of health will mostly fear such sicknesses as do not come to expression through fatigue and pain. It is, therefore, detrimental to sedate oneself with morphium. It is healthy when health brings zest. Illness brings apathy. This healthy way of living we can acquire only when

we make ourselves inwardly strong. This we do when we oppose our complicated conditions with strong, inner activity. The feverish search for health will cease only then when human beings no longer strive for health as such. The human being must learn to feel and perceive whether he is healthy and to know that he can easily put up with a flaw in health. This is only possible through a strong world conception that is effective right down into the physical body. This world outlook makes for harmony. This, however, is only possible through a world concept that is not dependent upon outer impressions. The spiritual scientific world concept leads man into regions that he can only reach if he is inwardly active. One cannot read a spiritual scientific book as one reads other books. It must be so written that it evokes one's own activity. The more one must struggle, the more there is between the lines, the healthier it is. This is so only in the theoretical matters, but spiritual science can be effective in all areas.

What we call spiritual science exists in order to become effective as a strong spiritual movement. It calls forth concepts that are provided with the most powerful energies so that human beings can take a stance against what faces one. Spiritual science would like to give an inner life that extends right into the limbs, into the blood circulation. Then will every individual perceive his health in his feeling of joy, in his feeling of zest and satisfaction. Almost every dietary regime is worthless. That the other fellow tells me that this and that are good for me is of no consequence. What matters is that I find satisfaction when taking my food. The human being must have understanding for his relation to this or that food. We should know what the spiritual process is that goes on between nature and us. To spiritualize *everything* — that's what becoming healthy means.

Perhaps it is currently thought that for the spiritual scientist eating is something to which he is indifferent, that he gorges himself, devoid of understanding for it. To become aware of what it means to partake of a part of the cosmos, a part that has been drenched with sunlight; to know of the complete spiritual relationship in which our environment stands, to savor it not only physically, but also spiritually, frees us from all sickening disgust, from all sickening encumbrances. Thus we see that to direct this striving for health onto the right tracks sets humanity a great challenge. But spiritual science will be strong. It will transform every human being who dedicates himself to it, bringing him to the attainment of what, for himself, is the normal pattern. This is at the same time a noble striving toward freedom that comes out of spiritual science and makes man his own master. Every man is an individual being from the standpoint of his characteristics as well as of his states of health and illness. We are placed in lawful relation to the world and must learn to know our situation therein. No outer power can help us. When we find this strong inner stance, then only are we complete human beings from whom nothing can be taken. But it also holds that nobody can give us anything. Nevertheless, we shall find our way in health and in illness because we have a strong, inner stance within ourselves. This secret, too, of all healthy striving has been expressed by a spirit, an eminently healthy thinking and healthy feeling spirit. He tells us how the harmonized human being unerringly goes his way. It was Goethe who, in his poem, *Orphic Primal Words*, says:

*As on the day that to the world bestowed thee
The sun stood high to greet the planet's sphere,
Thou didst thenceforth thrive ever on and on,
According to the law that brought thee here.
So must thou be, canst not from thee escape*

*The Sibyls and the Prophets spoke thy fate;
Not time nor power can destroy the mould
When form once cast doth livingly unfold.*

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