

Ita Wegman's Preface to the Book «Fundamentals of Therapy»¹

In our time, medicine has taken on a purely scientific character. With this it became totally dependent on the views that developed in the present time concerning science and scientific methods. According to these views we only accept as scientific what can be determined by sense perceptible observation, through experimentation or by rational deduction from these. We must ask ourselves: Are the scientific results gained in this way applicable to the individual human being? We may have noticed common human characteristics in so and so many human beings, however, the individual being of a single person is only understandable when we have the gift of direct observation of what is individual. A sick person is always a completely individual case. There are no two people that can be sick in the same way. The things of nature that are not spiritual go back to general laws. What is individual is always an expression of the activity of soul-spiritual laws. These laws are not grasped in concepts but are only accessible to observation. We will speak in this book of a medical system that is built on the observation of the spirit, in the same way that natural law is built on the sense-world. We know that many will believe us to be in opposition to the recognized natural-scientific direction of medicine. This will most certainly not be the case. We fully acknowledge today's results of this direction. It is undeniable though, that this direction of medicine must come to a halt before the true nature of illness. It can speak about the harm to the organism and its members, but it cannot gain insight into why an organism would develop harmful effects out of itself. The natural scientific direction of the organism lies in its development from seed to full maturity. Within this development, stopping short at what is natural, we will not find the forces that can obstruct this development. In illness, though, these forces are at work.

Where do they come from?

We will only be able to answer this question when we look at the – in a certain way – exaggerated natural evolution of the human being. Everywhere where such an exaggeration happens, unconscious activity takes over and consciousness retreats. From this we can conclude that the forces underlying consciousness, the spiritual forces, work in the opposite direction from the natural. This means that they must be catabolic forces, while the natural forces are anabolic. A human in a certain condition of health, and with a normal consciousness has within him a certain state of balance between the anabolic and catabolic forces. When this balance is disturbed then there is illness. This can happen in two ways. The anabolic forces can become too strong, then they weaken the spiritual forces. This is one form of illness. It happens, when for instance, the regenerating metabolic processes in the brain are too strong. Then consciousness is dampened. The other form of illness occurs when the catabolic forces become too strong. Then an exaggerated working of consciousness occurs. We meet the other form of illness when forces work in the digestive system that should only work with such strength in the brain. The exaggerated working of consciousness manifests as pain, for pain is nothing other than a heightened condition of consciousness.

Illnesses of the first type can only occur in the organism when, underlying a normal condition, a strong catabolic activity is at work. If this is dampened down or lessened in its strength, then illness occurs.

Illnesses of the second kind can only happen when, underlying a normal condition, a strong anabolic, regenerative activity occurs. Dampening this activity means illness.

¹ This manuscript in Ita Wegman's handwriting was discovered among her things in the early 1970s and initially published in the Newsletter of the Medical Section at the Goetheanum (no. 6, 1 May 1973). It is a concept by Ita Wegman, whose content reappears in the first and second chapters of Fundamentals of Therapy.

The first case is present in the human organism in all the organs that serve perception or thinking. A spiritual viewpoint makes immediately clear that perception and thinking are of a purely spiritual origin. A merely natural activity cannot be equated with perception and thinking. Rather, when perception and thinking should arise in the organism, the natural activity must lessen in order to make room for the spiritual. When, on the other hand natural activity is present in its full regenerating capacity, no spiritual activity can penetrate. This is the case with the metabolic system and with occurrences that underlie the movement of the organism. We can see here that as soon as we begin to observe an illness, we should keep an eye on the relationship of the natural and the spiritual activities.

Now, we have today a relatively complete science of the natural, but there is distance kept from a science of the spirit. In this book we will proceed from a science of the spirit in the same way as from a science of the natural. This presupposes that an observation of the spirit is acknowledged. This is not given to humans from the outset as is the case with the observation of the natural. We learn to perceive with our senses and we learn to use our conceptual power through our natural development and through our education. Spiritual observation has first to be gained. In this book illnesses and the healing process will be described as they are discovered by spiritual observation. This spiritual observation can be acquired through certain specific soul exercises. It will be objected that we cannot demand that every doctor do such exercises. An obvious objection against this book will therefore be: Its indications and statements cannot be examined by people who have not acquired a spiritual conception through such exercises.

We want to refute such objections. The soul-exercises that lead to spiritual perception consist either of a dampening or of an intensification of the soul-life. The dampening of the soul-life is within the soul an imitation of the illnesses of the first kind, an intensification of the soul-life is an imitation of the illnesses of the second kind. When we know the soul-condition that comes from such exercises, we also know the illnesses, for in the soul-conditions we have the pictures of them. If we describe the physical symptoms of illnesses by what we experience in these pictures, then we provide for every doctor the descriptions that he can examine. If the descriptions hold up to investigation, the indications of spiritual research are confirmed. And if the doctor takes in the descriptions of such spiritual research again and again, then, through his portrayals of the complex of symptoms, he can gradually acquire the spiritual insights himself. We are of the opinion that the correct reading of this book will make it possible for every doctor to behold the illnesses himself spiritually. However, we also know, since we believe that we understand human beings, that such reading will not take place in all cases because the readers will be annoyed by what they perceive as strange explanations. And between the spirit of some readers and the spirit of our book will be the anger of those that cannot get over the fact that we have to say something different from what they have said up to now.