

Some Philosophical Fragments

Supplement to Students Monthly Letter

HEALING

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CHAPTER II

IN the old mythological theologies diseases were said to have been visited upon mankind by the gods in punishment for the disobedience to divine edicts. If we interpret these fables in the Orphic manner, we must view "the gods" as the various aspects of natural law, through disobedience to which humanity brings down upon itself reactions of sickness and death. Thus to the philosophers man himself, through the unwisdom of his thoughts and actions, is the direct cause of all the evils which afflict him. Knowledge of the divine plan and obedience to the divine edicts are the foundations of health and the only panacea for the world's woe.

Immoderation due to ignorance then is the true cause of most mortal ills. Immoderation is unbalance and without true spiritual understanding the human creature is incapable of preserving that equilibrium in all his parts which is essential to good health. The wise ones of old who enjoyed the "philosophic extension of years" achieved their comparative immunity from physical ills through a moderation of all the extremes of thought and action, living according to what Aristotle calls the Golden Mean, that is "in all things not too much." This is called temperance. As all the progress in civilization is accomplished in the temperate zones of the earth so all individual progress must be accomplished in the temperate zones of living. But only the wise are temperate and the wise are few.

As health was originally corrupted through intemperance, so, though it be restored, it will be corrupted again until the cause of the corruption be

removed. True health is accordingly possible only to those who live according to the laws of life. For the rest of mankind there must be constant alternations between growth and decay, between health and disease. No man can actually BE well until he thinks well, lives well and acts well. Thus philosophy is the highest form of medicine and the philosopher the greatest of all physicians.

This is the true theory of health upon which all metaphysical systems of healing must be established. To the degree that they depart from this premise or are inconsistent with it to that degree they depart from and are inconsistent with reason and common sense. The physician must be more than a doctor of ills; he must be a builder of character, he must direct the resources of his patient to a more perfect method of living and thinking.

According to the priest-physicians of antiquity the intemperances arising from ignorance and causing disease manifest through seven categories of ailments. Each of these categories must be studied by the physician and his treatment adapted to the peculiarities of each. These categories are as follows:

1st: PHYSICAL DISEASE. Under this heading are grouped all such maladies as corrupt the flesh, inhibit function, destroy structure and finally bring about disintegration of the corporeal body. To the doctor of *meteria medica* nearly all diseases are regarded as physical but to the philosopher physician diseases are but a small part of sickness. Physical disease must be divided into two general classes:

(a) Such as have their origin directly in the body itself.

(b) Such as are communicated to the body either from the environment without or the superphysical parts of man within.

The physical body, being merely an instrument of the emotions and the mind, can seldom be regarded as an actual cause of disease but rather is the victim of mental, emotional and physical intemperances. By physical intemperance we mean those which originate from the physical impulses of the mind. Once a mental or emotional intemperance has caused a malady in the flesh it becomes necessary to regard a disease in a twofold aspect and it is often necessary to treat both the cause and the effect. Physical disease may arise from the breaking of a spiritual, mental or physical law and should be treated accordingly.

When it is evident that a physical law is the one which has been transgressed, either through ignorance or accident, such as lack of hygiene in the first case or some poisoning in the second, physical treatments are indicated. It is worse than folly to treat uncleanness with affirmations or poisonings with platitudes. In fact it verges on the sacriligious to enlist divine aid where only human common sense is necessary. It is also folly to take medicines when they are not needed or to refuse them when necessary. Those who disapprove of medicines should know that even food itself is medicine for hunger. A man may boast that he will never enter a chemist's shop but he has a chemist's shop within himself wherein the chemical elements of food are prepared that they may be easily assimilated into the tissues of the bodily fabric. While it is unquestionably true that many medicines are more dangerous than the disease they are intended to cure, it is also true that the wisest of the initiated physicians made use of herbs and poultices, and a good physic has saved many a life. It is always desirable to protect the body from the corrosive effect of powerful and dangerous drugs; but in this progressive century there are ample methods of working with physical disease which are both effective and when properly administered safe. Osteopathy, chiropractic, naturapathy, dietetics, physiotherapy, hydrotherapy, spectrochrome therapy and numerous other similar therapeutic methods have been successfully developed and applied. These, combined with common sense, and medicine where absolutely necessary, will prolong life and efficiency.

A word about surgery. In rare cases surgery is

the only method by which life can be preserved. Under such conditions surgery is certainly justified. Willful failure to use every reasonable means to preserve health and life is equal to suicide.

Under the heading of physical disease must be included such ills as are not pathological nor functional but arise from accidents and injuries. These require immediate treatment and only a fanatic will refuse his body those aids necessary to its survival.

2nd: EMOTIONAL DISEASES. Under this heading must be classified such ailments as have their origin in emotional intemperance, but which may later infect the physical fabric. Emotion generally destroys order, procedure, sequence and co-ordination of parts. It renders the life dependent upon feeling. The individual responds immoderately to impulses of pleasure and displeasure. Real values are lost sight of and the life is dedicated to the service of imminent impulse. Such persons possess strong sympathies but are weak in the control of them. We all know "gushy" and sentimental persons whose hearts are in the right place but who are utterly lacking in discrimination, poise and foresight.

Sentimentalism can become a disease and, contributing its erratic quality to the body generally produces acute nervous conditions and numerous psycho-physical complexes detrimental to the biological economy. When such a person seeks health it is the physician's duty to emphasize the absolute necessity for poise and emotional discipline. These people must build reasonable foundations under their feelings so that they live by directed thought and not by undirected reflex. Various physical treatments may temporarily restore a semblance of bodily harmony but the stress of immoderate sentimentalism will leave its scars in the tissues and will tear down the bodily health as quickly as it is restored. Many religious institutions foster emotionalism, whipping the sentiments by a carefully planned theological theatricalism.

Persons inclined to uncontrollable emotionalism should never frequent places where there is emotional display. These persons should also work industriously to attain detachment for nearly all emotional people are desperately attached to persons or ideas.

This attachment adds to the nervous strain and prevents relaxation. Emotional people should also be constantly watchful of inhibitions for suppressed emotionalism often leads to desperate consequences. In attempting to correct emotional unbalance never deny the existence of the sentiments or attempt to control them by a strong action of the will. Rather seek to out grow them by building in a sufficient structure of intellectual perspective so that the excess of feeling will cease of its own accord, being neutralized by intelligent thinking. The physician working with such cases must have long patience with which to listen and good advice with which to assist the patient out of his emotional complexes.

3rd: THE PASSIONAL DISEASES. The passions of man differ from his emotions because of the violence with which they are directed to the accomplishment of some definite purpose. Emotions are more or less scattered and static but passions are usually coordinated and dynamic.

Of the passions probably the most powerful is ambition which is one of the chief destroyers of human life. Ambition which is a constant drive to a position of power is an immoderate passion to which is usually sacrificed all of the worthwhile things of life. Nearly all of the world's so-called great men are sick, for the constant striving after material gain exhausts the energies and impoverishes the soul. The physician should attempt to direct the mind of the patient towards the improvement of his inner life and to the realization that it is nobler to become wise than it is to possess things or express power.

Another powerful passional disease manifests through sexual intemperance or abnormality. This field is too great to be covered in so short a writing and where it is presumed to exist it should be immediately studied by a qualified psycho-analyst. The sexual energy lies at the root of all human progress and it should not be destroyed but should be lifted as far as possible from the level of animal instinct to the plane of creative endeavor. Under all circumstances the physician must work towards normalcy and moderation, realizing that all complexes rise from misuse.

A third and very prevalent passional disease is

appetite. Inordinate appetites gratified at the expense of the bodily harmony must always result in deterioration of the physical fabric. Moderation of living is simplicity and, all things being equal, he is happiest who limits his appetites to that which is necessary. Again, spiritual healing is of very little use in correcting the evils brought about by physical indulgence. The problem is simply one in self-control. No man has a right to expect to enjoy good health who cannot to a reasonable degree subdue his appetites and continue in a state of temperance. The greatest boon which nature can bestow is health and she reserves this reward for those who live reasonably and rationally.

Under the heading of passional disease are also to be included anger, hate, greed, lust, jealousy and all such violent and destructive emotions as wrack the soul and corrode the flesh. No person can expect his body to be free from poisons if his mind is filled with them. We sometimes think that we do another a great harm by hating him when in reality he is indifferent to our dislike and we canker only ourselves. No one has a right to be either healthy or happy in whose soul resides destructive animosities. Cleanse first the soul of its passions and in most cases there will be observed a rapid improvement in the physical health. We make ourselves ill by our own misdeeds and it is only fair and right that we should make ourselves well again by the correction of these evils. No man who has not purified his own life should seek health from his physician.

4th: MENTAL DISEASES. What we are is in great measure the result of what we think. When we speak of mental disease we do not necessarily infer what is commonly meant by insanity. Rather we mean destructive systems of thinking which turn the life awry. The mind was given to man that by it he might direct his actions and guard from excess the lesser parts of himself. The whole life which we live here is dominated by our mental attitudes. If these attitudes be unworthy or destructive the entire existence is clouded and we live by a code inferior to that proper for man. The mind is a precious instrument by the right use of which we distil experience from action, build character and elevate ourselves to an almost divine estate. It is the mind

alone of all the faculties of man which is capable of discovering moderation. An old philosopher once said: "An enlightened mind in a human body is the greatest in the least."

The purpose of education is to insure the health of the mind but as most modern educational systems are devoted solely to materialistic culture, the mind from childhood is denied several forms of knowledge essential to its well-being. When the mind is trained to a point of true discrimination the thinker becomes a sage. Mind, like all other parts of the material man, has, however, boundaries and limitations and wisdom dictates that these be properly understood. A man who makes less than proper use of his mind is less than a man; a man who makes more than proper use of his mind endangers the integrity of his thinking equipment. For example lack of sufficient mental exercise leaves the mind slow and unresponsive and usually brutal and inconsistent, but if the mind on the other hand is over-exerted and focussed upon problems beyond its capacity its faculties are impaired, thoughts are confused and mania may follow. Between these two extremes is that divine moderation by which the intellect, preserved from corruption and directed towards truth, through its gradual unfoldment elevates the whole personality to a philosophic life.

Those excesses which disease the mind arise out of ignorance and perversion. Disease due to ignorance include various opinionisms which Heraclitus so well defined: "A falling sickness of the intellect." Also under this heading are various fallacies of the educational system by which the mind is wrongly trained in values. Also unsound philosophies and theologies by which the thinking may be unduly influenced and reason obscured by prejudice and misdirected zeal. Of that class of mental disease due to perversion are such as those by which thought power is willfully directed to an unworthy end as schemes, plots, intrigues, and all systems of mental exploitation, in which thought becomes an instrument of unfair advantage. Our whole industrial civilization is rife with examples of mis-directed mind force. A man who secretly plots against the common good or raises empire upon deceits and

fanaticism for profit must not be surprised if his physical health is destroyed by his evil practices. For such a man to ask divine assistance for his physical ills is worse than sacrilege for it is written in the law that no man may sow evil and reap good.

5th: DISEASES DUE TO IMAGINATION. What Plato calls the imaginative aspect of the human soul is the abode of phantoms and chimera. Imagination arises out of the chemical relationship between the known and the unknown. The small intellectual sphere of man is immersed in a limitless expanse of the unknown. Where reason leaves off imagination begins. Imaginations arise from the unassimilated elements of religion, tradition and experience. Morbid imaginations are nightmares of our waking hours, usually founded upon some small part of truth, greatly distorted and out of perspective. A morbid imagination can destroy the whole complexion of life and where it exists may generally be accepted as the cause of such physical ills as are present. Examples of morbid imagination may range anywhere from distrust of people to melancholia and fears of insanity.

One of the least suspected forms of imagination is that which assigns miraculous origins and purposes to perfectly ordinary and prosaic circumstances. The physicist seeks for a natural, physical origin to everything; the metaphysician seeks for a supernatural, metaphysical origin for everything. It is unreasonable to maintain that the material universe was founded without reason, perpetuated without intellect and destroyed without hope, but it is also unreasonable to attribute a toothache to the devil, black magic, secret enemies or the personal animosity of God. Each of these conclusions in its own field is an example of morbid imagination. When the mind begins looking for the supernatural it has little difficulty in discovering miracles. If this same mind lacks a sound foundation in the philosophy of metaphysics, it soon involves itself in a hopeless muddle of demons, sprites, goblins and sorceries. All these things are the stuff that manias are made from.

(To be continued)