

MODERN MEDICINE
In Its Higher Synthesis.

6

Lecture delivered in the Aula Magna
of Bari University in occasion of the
opening of the academic year, Nov. 29th,
1950.

Together with a few other followers of clinical and medical pathology, who are for the majority - Latin-Mediterraneans, I uphold and teach that kind of medical thought known as Neohippocratism on account of its noble origins. By this word I mean a medicine which is purely constitutional, unitarian, synthetic and correlative, or, in other words, the medicine and biopsychology of the human person. I uphold it against an ever more encroaching and irrational medicine that we may call ultra-analytical and divisive. There is no doubt that our science - one of the noblest and most universal branches of knowledge - is becoming on this account human mechanics. The latter divides the organism in parts as if it were a machine to be mended: well armed with a diagnostic technique founded on refined and mathematically accurate local analysis, which will never be able to "biometrize" the spiritual functions of man, and with a bloody therapeutical handicraft, it does not possess the veritable art of healing the individual who suffers in his totality.

Among those who have no knowledge of medicine, only few perhaps know that it can be no more a science and an art which studies only the separate organs and tissues, in order to treat their injuries in a fragmentary manner; an art which believes in healing all diseases by means of a wonderful local injection, if not by the touch of magical hands, or by cutting away a whole organ as if it were physiologically superfluous, or by applying mechanical contrivances to the human flesh. And yet this flesh is made of matter and spirit, nor can it be tackled by cutting away the diseased part and replacing destroyed organs and tissues with new ones, possibly belonging to animals.

Genuine medicine, which does not despise these resources of biochemistry, biophysics, diagnosis and local therapy, cannot however take into account only these factors. It must be a science and an art the aim of which is to know, under-

11/11/50

stand and treat the individual considered as a whole, suffering with all his mysterious and unique individuality and with that unity of body and mind which are always watching each other. Considered as such, our medicine is certainly much more difficult, inasmuch as it becomes a universal science, i.e. the most noble, comprehensive and indispensable of all sciences.

In point of fact, the medicine of the individual means psychology, philosophy, art and religion. It means facing the problems of man as a living, thinking, sentient and suffering being, who exists and co-exists with the whole universe, with all living and dead creatures, and from whom he receives and to whom he gives all that he can for the good of his body and for the peace and elevation of the spirit.

We thus see the two actual aspects of medicine which are in antithesis with one another, both as regards method and practical application.

~~But~~ we are ^{able} to assert with pride as Italians and Mediterraneans - heirs of the very ancient wisdom of Greek-Italic physicians and philosophers - that this unitarian synthetic medicine belongs to us as a unifying science of art, philosophy, psychology and - as we want to prove - as a moral and social doctrine of man.

It is interesting to note, on the otherhand, how with other peoples, such as belonging to Northern Europe and America, vital mechanism, super-technique and super-analysis, predominates in medicine just as it is the case in all manifestations of practical life and thought. This can be ascribed to their peculiar psychology.

In order to judge an individual who suffers from heart disease, one goes first to the specialist for an electrocardiogram or an electrophonocardio gram, and a decision is taken according to his findings. Then one goes to the radiologist, who gives his advice on the basis of the radiogram and the radiochemogram of the heart, or following an arteriocardiography taken with modern radio-opaque means; then one goes to the analyst of the blood, humours and of biological reactions; then to the psychanalyst and to the psychosomatic physician. The latter will have to look out for a possible source of troubles of rythm and of the heart's sensibility, due to affective Freudian complexes buried in the patient's subconscious. Finally the patient will ask himself who is to tell him the disease he is suffering from, and, if his heart is really in bad condition, whether the cause lies in his brain, his liver, the thyroid or the stomach, etc., because it is impossible to find a physician capable of making a true clinical synthesis of the morbid process after so many analytical subdivisions. With re-

gard to surgery, we know, for instance, that for the digestive apparatus there is the surgeon who will operate only on the ^oesophagus, while another one is interested only in the stomach or in the duodenum or in the gallbladder, or else only in the appendix or in the colon or in the rectum.

What would our fathers Alcmeon of Croton and Hippocrates of Kos say if they saw - on ~~the~~ coming back to life - how their great laws, the law of collaboration between antagonist forces in functional equilibrium and the one of "consensus partium" and of the unity of the manifold, have been forgotten by this atomistic and divisory medicine? What would the two great Christian philosophers and geniuses, Augustine and Thomas, say? We owe to them the fact of having proclaimed - against all exaggerated spiritual monism - that man is always a synthesis of body and soul, united to form a new compound that is like a third entity which is no more mere body alone or soul alone. This psycho-somatic unitarian doctrine is forgotten nowadays, because, contrary to what it may appear, also the scientists of overseas and beyond the Alps, fanatical followers of psychoanalysis and of so-called psychosomatic medicine, are only - in my opinion - uninterruptedly dissociating body and soul.

We must now fix accurately the more important aspects and the aims to be attained by our unitarian, synthetic and anti-divisory ~~synthesis of the human being~~ medicine: i.e. which are the great synthesis of the human being it must arrive at, in its effort to improve and heal the man who suffers.

In order to understand these synthetic aims, I must speak of the fundamental laws of biology and modern medicine which were established six centuries B.C. - by the two famous physicians: Alcmeon and Hippocrates. SIX centuries B.C. - viz. one century before Hippocrates ~~is~~ the name of the physician Alcmeon of the Italic school of Croton (Calabria) came first and foremost. It is to him that we owe the biological law without which modern physiology would be as a ship without a compass: the law that any normal function is the resultant of an unbroken equilibrium between two antagonistic forces by virtue of the vital balancing force. When this equilibrium ceases, we have a disease. This Alcmeonic law of a collaboration of the antagonists is the same law which the philosopher Heraclitus, a contemporary of Alcmeon, and the great Pythagoras applied to the whole universe. It is the DIALECTIC LAW both of life of the body and of thought. The great thinkers of Renaissance - such as Bruno and Leonardo - made it their own and, in modern times, Hegel based on it his dialectics of the spirit.

Thesis and antithesis and synthesis, or, if the latter is lacking, "catathesis".

nothing can be thought of by the human intellect, nothing of what the senses bring to us, nothing of what upsets our heart, can escape this bi-polar or dual principle -- this unity of duality -- that lasts till catathesis appears under the dynamic equilibrium between opposing forces. In biology, catathesis means disease and death, and in the physical world, degradation, disintegration and homogeneousness of matter. Thanks to the unceasing actuation of Alcmeon's law, a consensus of all parts reigns supreme in the organism, viz. that unity of the manifold on which Hippocrates built up later his constitutional unitarian doctrine of disease. Nowadays, however, one speaks no more -- as in those times and before the modern scientific era of medicine -- of an equilibrium between four different and contrasting humours, such as blood and pituita, yellow bile and black bile. One speaks instead of the equilibrium of hormones, ferments, vitamins, oligodynamic mineral salts, of the sympathetic and parasympathetic systems, that is of chemical and nervous antagonisms which regulate the anabolic cathabolic processes of all cells, and also of the accumulation and expenditure of vital energy. In order to achieve the synthesis - the unity of our psychic constitution - the collaboration of the antagonists extends also to the two antithetic psychological spheres: the instinctive-emotional sphere or ^{Tymo}noopsyche, and the ideational-volitive sphere or noopsyche. Thus we are able to understand this trend of modern medical thought towards the unifying syntheses of man, inasmuch as it is guided by the study of those mechanisms which regulate the vital processes that are at the basis of an ever more perfect evolutionary harmonization of antithetic forces, either physical or chemical, either nervous or psychic. Such a harmony varies according to each individual, to his hereditary constitution and surroundings, to his neuro-humoral temperament and, more particularly, to his hereditary emotional and intellectual character.

I wish to give here an ideal panorama of the entire unitarian and correlative medicine of the human being, briefly pointing out the four fields in which the neo-hippocratic physician must and can help the individual, in order to favour the harmony of the person and the different syntheses of the vital processes.

The first of these syntheses which requires to the utmost degree that the physician be endowed with intuition and, at the same time, with human feelings, is the synthesis of psychological self together with the biological self: of Logos and BIOS; of soul and body. Logos and Bios: the immaterial, spiritual principle and the flesh that wants to live and reproduce itself, thus created by

parents and for which we are ~~vital~~ virtually not responsible. It is a union between two heterogenous substances, for ever changing and "becoming" through conflicts and attempts to achieve harmony and equilibrium, according to the degree reached by the psycho-physical hierarchic ascending chronological development of each subject.

It is asking too much of the physician to tell us to what point body and soul form a unity and peacefully live the same life, even if he be a psychologist, a philosopher and a moral man. We all feel ~~that~~ a conflict between the two is a rule, and that a hierarchical integration between biological self and psychological self is extremely difficult and rare. In different men it presents an unlimited number of gradations, from the state of customary rebellion of the body to the spiritual self for lack of evolution and structural motives, above all of certain zonae of the brain (diencephalon and pre-frontal lobes), up to various degrees of emotional immaturity and inhibitory critical deficiency, finally reaching the state of veritable psychopathic dissociation of the animal sphere from the rational one. But I wish to point out that the particular task of a modern physician is to understand these degrees of greater or lesser integration between body and soul, and that he must make every effort to correct and heal with the resources at his disposal (nowadays even psychosurgery has been attempted on criminals and psychic abnormals), the evolutional balances between the bodily and spiritual spheres. Even though not taking ^{the} place of the magistrate and jurist, the physician must always collaborate with them and has the right to judge the intervention of organic and biological, psychological factors in the genesis of anomalies and moral deviations as well as in the genesis of crime. These are Human facts which similar to all the manifestations of the individual, have at the same time, physiological and spiritual origins.

A second unifying synthesis - perhaps still more difficult, but intimately connected with it, according to modern medical endocrinological and neuropsychological studies - concerns our own psychic unity, with its two spheres of thought and feeling, of rational will and irrational emotion, and with the two realms of conscience and of the unconscious.

It is an ocean on which we concentrate our attention, only to perceive that our medical psychological research stops a few meters from the surface, Thought and feeling, noopsyche and thymopsyche. According to the different individuals we have also here a gradation of states of immaturity or of a more or less incomplete maturity, and therefore of affective-idealizing unbalances, up to veritable "psychotic" and psychopathic dissociations. Even in this case famous philosophers have in all times tried to dissociate the soul in two spheres, the

sentimental and ideational while everybody knows the harm done by these psychological monisms, at times more panlogistic and idealistic, and at other times more romantic or more instinctive. Modern unitarian medicine must also ascertain the great number of different forms of dissociation of what must normally be united, viz, thought and feeling. It must also make every effort to correct and to give back equilibrium, and to heal the excesses resulting from feeling, more often from instinct, or from logic, and from abstract, cold and often inhuman thought.

What a modern physician may accomplish in this field is shown by very recent researches to which I am devoting my clinical activity. I speak of a region of the brain called DIENCEPHALON, which proves to be, to an ever increasing extent, the regulating factor of relations between instinctive-emotional life and rational life. Injuries of the diencephalon, which free these nervous centers from higher control of the cortex of the brain - especially of the prefrontal and supra-orbitary zonae of the brain - may cause serious anomalies in the affective-emotional field, perversions and delinquency. We physicians are glad to know that today and perhaps in a very near future our art, by performing surgical operations on these parts of the brain, may be able to change a dissolute and vagabond boy into a normal one, and a criminal into a honest worker.

Even more difficult is the field of relations and of a possible medical harmonization of the two spheres; conscience and the unconscious. Nowadays the latter - thanks especially to Freud and his pupils - has become a very fruitful ground of researches and, with many reserves, also of medical-psychological treatments. It is not merely a question of relations between conscious self and a part of our psyche which has become subconscious or unconscious because it had been forgotten or watonly forgotten by the conscious self, so that the latter should be independent of moral self; in other words, the so called, Superego. Here we enter the field of Psychoanalysis and of psychoanalytical treatments.

But it is also a question of that other field of the unconscious - explained by Jung - which includes ideas, feelings and symbolical images (the so-called archetypes) buried in the depths of our soul, as a psychic inheritance received from our remote ancestors, or which are part of the specific patrimony of the entire human collectivity. It is an atavistic and collective "unconscious" that acts within our life of thought and action, apparently conscious and free; without our being aware of it. Therefore the modern physician of the human ^{being} must accomplish what he can to make him understand where his conscious and free activity begins and where it ends; as also the unconscious and the involuntary,

He must be able to explain to the subject the part taken by the forces of his collective of individual unconscious. In point of fact it is clear that his conscious and free self is not responsible for his apparently free and voluntary actions. What a difficult and yet necessary task is that of modern medicine in order to help men's moral judgement, still founded on the abstract principle of a self which can assert its will, independently of the body and of its innermost unconscious!

On the other hand, there is also the ^{wide} field of objective metapsychics or parapsychology which proves that in our self there is an ^{abysmal} depth of forces which go beyond the laws of mechanics, physiology, psychology: extrasensorial, supermechanical and supertemporal forces which show themselves in phenomena of telesthesia and clairvoyance, of premonitions, telepathy, telekinesis, and of all phenomena of which the so-called SENSITIVES are capable.

Nobody can deny nowadays these metapsychic and parapsychological phenomena, simply because we have no explanations at hand. Also in this case the physician has the right and the duty to study these wonderful phenomena with a mind free of materialistic or spiritualistic prejudices, inasmuch as they undoubtedly belong to the field of the dissociation of human being and of the probable uprising of the immaterial spirit - in given conditions - against the laws of time, space, of physiology and of normal psychology.

Let us now examine the third synthesis of the man, i.e. the one that must join the latter with the physical and biological universe by which he is surrounded, in order to bring into being what we may call the COSMIC-BIOLOGICAL-HUMAN SOLIDARITY.

No doubt between man and all other living and dead creatures there exists an uninterrupted communion and an intelligent and loving solidarity, that was expounded by the two greatest apostles of universal love - Paul and Francis of Assisi - and later by the greatest thinkers of the Italian Renaissance, Leonardo, the famous artist, scientist and cosmic philosopher, considered the world ~~the~~ (these are his own words) as "an immense living entity endowed with organs, sensibility and with a life of its own: closely linked to every creature breathing under the same sky".

But more than in any philosophical doctrine, this cosmic-biological-human solidarity is exalted in the "cantico delle creature" by ST. Francis of Assisi. It is interesting to note that not only the physician and the biologist of the human person, but also the physicist and the mathematician aspire to the spiritual world. ⁶ They feel that

It really is a sacred and scientific poem that unites heaven and earth, because all things - plants, animals, men and things - are rightly considered as belonging to one great family, having the same Heavenly Father.

Nowadays it is interesting to note that not only the physician and the biologist of the human person, but also the physicist and the mathematician aspire to the spiritual world.. They feel that the moment has come to abandon atomism and mechanics. In fact by disintegrating the atom, they also tend to mechanizing and disintegrating the human person. Furthermore this trend wants to separate biology from physics and man from other living beings. Even such pure physicians and mathematicians as for example Enrico Medi and Fantappiè feel that they must attain a unitarian concept of the entire universe. They feel that ^{the} life of the single individual inserts itself in the life of the universe and viceversa, and that the atom is not a machine or an agglomeration of small globules, but is highly organized and - like all beings - is ruled by an ACTIVE PRINCIPLE. Therefore, as Enrico Medi said, St. Francis of Assisi could well add to his poem: "Praise be to THEE, my Lord, for Brother electron, proton, neutron, positron, small neutron, for sister molecules, galaxies, spiral nebulae and for entire universes."

We live under the necessary influence not only of the various solar radiations - and perhaps of the planets - but also of the radiations of more distant celestial bodies, and we take from the atmosphere ionized metallic dust that comes from fragments of planets which fall on the earth, or spring from the depths of our globe following volcanic eruptions; we also know that we need the smallest and most despised living creatures, such as the billions of microbes belonging to the vegetable world, so necessary to the life of plants; and moulds and animal and plant poisons which supply us with powerful means to heal and to escape death. And we are not speaking of all the help that comes to us from the animal and vegetable world: hormones, amino acids, ferments, vitamins, salts and pigments. The entire physical and biological world works for and sustains us, just it defends us and is our heart's joy. But in turn, our spirit is capable of acting on cosmic matter, forming, disintegrating, rebuilding and moulding it without limitations of space and time and without obeying mechanical laws.

Nowadays all this is revealed to us by the wonderful phenomena of objective metapsychics, even those controlled in University centres; besides by very recent experiences which prove that human will may exert an influence even on the germination and tropism of plants.

Thus the modern science of the human being proves to us the universal intercourse of man's life with all other creatures. It takes place in a subconscious or uncons

unconscious manner, and man should now examine it both with his rational brain and with his heart. Since this COSMIC FEELING, which is much more developed in primitive and Eastern peoples than in more civilized and Western ones, is the feeling that more than any other should become - as we believe - the rational basis of altruism: the antidote of that blind and brutal egotism which poisons individuals and peoples.

In point of fact, when man will have understood and deeply felt this human cosmic-biological solidarity and when he will have lovingly approached and united himself to nature - by coming out from that irrational isolation of city life, life, that deprives him of sun, oxygen, radiations and healthy foodstuffs - only then will he be able to admit that all have right to the source of natural gifts offered to humanity by the universe, even if proportions are not always equal. If the Supreme Giver is only one and, as such, has given to the universe from stars to atmosphere, from light to the warmth of the sun, from plants to animal, all the wealth that what necessary for the physiological and spiritual needs of men, we can but infer that each one is entitled to a fragment of this universe: the smallest share of earth, sun, blue sky, oxygen, trees, pure waters, plants and domestic animals. No man can any longer encroach upon and monopolize that which the infallible legislator has granted to everyone for the most elementary needs of life.

No unnecessary possession can be tolerated any longer. No longer should we see some persons living in the greatest affluence while others suffer the direst poverty. Such a state of things should ^{exist} no more either within the same people or among different peoples.

You can see therefore how medicine, as we understand it, i.e. as the biology of the total person (body and spirit) with his obligations towards life and the entire universe becomes true religion as well as rational ethics.

By its scientific principles and its BIOLOGICAL HUMANISM - as we shall call it - it tends to widen its field of action from healing individual ailments to try to solve psychological-moral problems of associated life, in order to try and free men from dissociations of body and spirit which are so often met with. Especially as more often that not it is the body that wins in its conflict with the soul; the body that can be compared to the cold cruelty of a tiger, the insatiable hunger of a wolf, the domineering pride of a lion, the poisonous snare of a serpent.

Our medical-biological humanism, synthesist and harmonizer of the individual, aims at improving and rendering men more and more normal, as well as at humanizing and uniting them, while divisive mechanics - both in medicine and in sociology - disintegrate and divide them dragging them down to the level of beasts.

Thus our medicine, perhaps similar to, if not better than priesthood, by healing soul and body, lovingly and in an understanding way, attains the highest synthesis of the individual, the ultimate goal of which is to unite man with his Maker, human nature with divine nature.

A truly great physician - and this is my loftiest aspiration - will, perhaps be able to write in a very near future on the fronton of each athenaeum of high culture Augustin's inspired words: Ubi homo ibi Deus. But such a physician may also be able to add, and perhaps this addition will vex neither Father Hippocrates nor the holy philosopher Augustine; ubi homo, ubi medicus, ibi Deus.

Nicola Pehde.

Professor of Clinical and Medical Pathology at Rome University.