

Book Review by Jay Yasgur, M.Sc.

Form, Life and Consciousness:

An introduction to Anthroposophic Medicine and Study of the Human Being

by Armin J. Husemann, MD

Foreword by Peter Heusser, MD

Translated by Catherine E. Creeger

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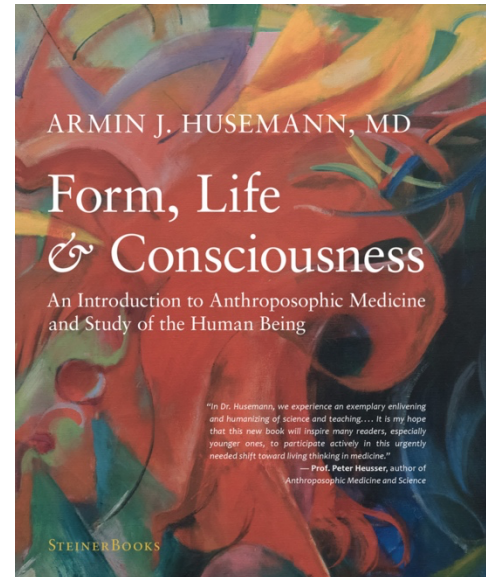
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“Nature is an open mystery.” —GOETHE

If you have been reading my assorted articles in this journal you are aware that I have a special affinity to anthroposophy -anthroposophical medicine (sometimes called anthroposophically-extended medicine -AxM).¹



Well, a new book has recently appeared *Form, Life and Consciousness* (2019) by A. J. Husemann, MD. Following this review is a brief resuscitation of a favorite anthroposophical book that I previously reviewed for this journal.

Armin Johannes Husemann, M.D. (1950–) is an anthroposophical physician who comes from a family devoted to anthroposophy’s worldview. He worked as a Waldorf school doctor from 1988 to 1993 and since 1993, has served as director and lecturer at the Eugen Kolisko Academy (formerly The Anthroposophic Medical Seminar) in Filderstadt, Germany. He has also carried on a private clinical practice in Stuttgart since 1987.²

But before you begin these books, and perhaps your study of anthroposophy, I highly suggest that you read Henk van Oort’s, *Anthroposophy: A Concise Introduction to Rudolf Steiner's Spiritual Philosophy* (2008). This clearly written volume of one hundred pages contains information on every facet of anthroposophy, making use of many illustrations and photos. This slim treatise will make your entry into Rudolf Steiner’s world gentler and much less complex. Granted, anthroposophy is quite a profound subject which I don’t mean to discount or trivialize. Yet I wish I had that book when first starting my anthroposophical studies in the late 1980s. The very first book I read was, *Rudolf Steiner and Holistic Medicine* (1987; Francis X. King). Though dated now, it proved worthwhile for me at the time.

Armin's book contains seven chapters and an afterword which deals with Goethe's thinking -his thought process as it relates to the training of physicians. Much is written about Goethe yet precious little is understood about his thought process and what it entails. The reason for this is two-fold as explanations are often cloaked in unintelligible language and the concept itself is a difficult one. Let's see if some of this mystery can be unraveled during this review.

It is suggested that in order to better understand nature and one's patient, one must create living ideas concerning phenomenon instead of merely looking with a "simple often one-dimensional eye." The observer must engage in observation with the help of one's will—will power. One must exert will during the thinking process in order to become more open to the reality which is in front of you—this could be called enlivened or heart thinking. The habit of having to explain everything with preconceived theories must be abandoned. And so, in this active, will-enlivened thinking, the observer attempts to gather perceptions from nature and his patient in a disciplined yet empathetic manner. Steiner took Goethe's approach to another level when he proposed various meditative exercises designed to increase one's capacity to think imaginatively.³

To help get the flavor of Goethe's approach (and Steiner's), consider this from Koenig's *Animals: an imaginative zoology* (2013). Karl Koenig, MD was no doubt an expert in approaching phenomenon via his highly developed 'living imagination.'

"...Koenig's writings on animals is a wonderful example of the way he worked ...he was able to penetrate the theme in an imaginative fashion that is only possible out of the forces of thinking awakening [which awakens] within the heart. When Koenig was a seven-year-old, Rudolf Steiner had spoken prophetic words in the very city of Vienna [Koenig's home city]: 'Other abilities like thinking through one's heart will develop within the human soul during its transformation into the future'." –Immanuel Klotz (p. 14).⁴

In order to help illustrate this unusual mode of thinking, as well as review this book, each chapter will be cited and examples or quotes provided.

From Chapter 1, "Form and Life":

How the patient describes their symptoms reveals essential characteristics of that person, the illness and how they deal with it are used in our repertorial and materia medica study. However, the difference between that thought process and the Goethean one is that the clinician attempts to understand or digest that information inwardly, intuitively. To create an intuitive understanding of what is happening in the other and by reflecting upon those aspects one should be able to 'sense' our way into what the patient truly feels and needs. Let's look at a concrete example as brought forth in the essay Sclerosis and inflammation:

"The current interpretation of inflammation as the cause of atherosclerosis

rather than as its consequence is due to confusion of cause and effect.

“[For example] The second dentition is a characteristic instance. As soon as permanent teeth begin to destroy the roots of baby teeth through pressure necrosis, those roots are ‘interpreted’ as foreign bodies. From that point on, foreign-body giant cells appear, helping to break down the remains of the root tissue.”—p. 19.

Other addressed aspects include, Open and Close, Movement and rest, The part and the whole, Grandchild and grandmother, Rest ‘in the wrong place,’ Digestion as physiological inflammation, Physiological sclerosis in the organs of the head, Death in the midst of life, The temporal structure of growth, Death as the physician’s teacher: The story of Godfather Death, The whole lives in the part: the functional histology of the small intestinal mucosa, The biotope of the center: lungs and heart and The physical body as an image of time, etc. There are about thirty of these brief essays in this foundational chapter.

From Chapter 2, “Life and Consciousness,” the author addresses the following four points as found on page 44: “1) evolution leads to separation from life’s necessities, 2) the resulting deficit creates desire and becomes conscious in the form of a drive, 3) the search for fulfillment in the outer world activates the senses and nervous system until the drive is satisfied and 4) as a result of uniting with the object of desire, pleasure and fulfillment are experienced.”

Other brief essays which plant further nuggets of Goethean Science include, Birds live without growing, Snakes and birds, The principle of compensation, form, color and song in the breeding biology of birds and No one can laugh while carrying a piano, etc.

From Chapter 3, “Humans and Animals,” other fundamental concepts concerning the relationship between the two are presented—i.e., “No animal ever seeks out life-threatening situations as human teenagers do.”

In this chapter, a number of comparative zoological questions are raised, i.e., Uprightness as a biomechanical problem, Anatomy of speech and thinking, The anatomy of speech and Thinking—a uniquely human characteristic, etc. Animals possess a certain intelligence yet they lack any ability to question either their behavior or context. In man, the thought process encompasses an awareness, a self-reflective intelligence which is able to distance itself from external behaviors and contexts.

From Chapter 4, “The Human Being and the Processes of Nature,” analogies are drawn between processes found in the make-up of the Earth and in the body of man.

“Human beings become ill when their bodies become ‘too similar’ to nature—when untransformed natural processes persist in the body. According to Rudolf

Steiner, this over-similarity underlies Hahnemann's 'simile.' Thus, by cultivating an inner sense and enthusiasm for animals, plants, and minerals, we awake to processes that can appear as illnesses in the human body" (p. 116).

Anthroposophical pharmacists in cooperation with physicians create special remedies manufactured according to Steiner's indications which take into account substance idiosyncrasies and account for the various rhythmic processes found in nature.

Key concepts concerning AxM and how one looks upon anatomy and physiology are surveyed, e.g., The Earth's mountain formations and mineralization in the human body, Serpentine and radiolarite: silica processes in the Earth and human body, Images of iron in nature: thoughts on a natural remedies field trip, Intramembranous and endochondral ossification, How plants and animals handle their tissues, The natural world and the members of the human constitution and Trees, poisonous plants, and fungi, etc. In this section Armin briefly discusses *Bryonia dioica* and *Aconitum napellus* offering a brief case concerning the latter. These aspects are again approached from thought processes which Goethe originated and Steiner fructified. Thus, it may take the uninitiated some time to comprehend these concepts as they are rather foreign to most of us. One can't be expected to immediately grasp this new 'human science' as it is not a schematic system which can be finalized or ever completed. It is all a process, a metamorphosis.

More of these ideas are brought to focus for clinicians, in Chapter 5, the largest (85 pages), "Clinical Pictures and Disease Patterns."

The following topics are covered to one degree or another by Husemann: Eye and stomach, Rage and fear, Asthma, Pneumonia, Will and Matter as energy and Medical thinking and Quantum physics, etc. The author ends this chapter by devoting 36 pages to cancer. Well into this section, the application of musical knowledge is introduced largely based on his father's (Gisbert) seminal studies and Armin's more recent exploration in his 2003 text, *Harmony of The Body - Musical Principles in Human Physiology*.

In regards to cancer:

"With reference to the later part of a person's biography, Lawrence LeShan, the founder of psycho-oncology, coined the expression 'the song you came to sing in this lifetime,' meaning *coherence* with one's life's work in a profession [As you may be aware, Rajan Sankaran discusses this metaphorical aspect in his writings]. In reality, the question, 'How strongly can I identify with my professional activity?' means 'Is my higher 'I,' my destiny, at work in what I do?'

The same question applies to personal life situations with regard to one's own family and family of origin. If we acknowledge the need to distinguish between 'I' and 'not-I' in the body on the immunological level, this must also be true in a much deeper sense of our relationship to the outside world. The warmth of enthusiasm that results from complete identification with our occupation and our family engenders warmth that, like a fever on the immunological level, constantly recognizes and breaks-up cancer cells as they develop (even in healthy people)" (pp. 214–5).

The role of inflammation, with a section devoted to Coley's fever therapy, ends this chapter.

From Chapter 6, "Working Principles of Therapeutic Eurythmy," a few of the many topics discussed include Therapeutic eurythmy and homeopathy, Form and movement, an exercise in sculptural envisaging, Soul gestures in embryonic development, Consonants, the allergy exercise, TSRMA, Metamorphoses of breathing in hearing and speaking, Old ear, young larynx, Metamorphoses of occiput and ear in the larynx, Hearing 'from the spine,' Consonants and vowels and The major vowel exercises, etc.⁵

About 20 pages is devoted to instruction and case examples of therapeutic eurythmy especially as it relates to the therapeutic use of the vowel A (long A). 'Dyslexia therapy in Waldorf Schools: a case study' is offered and the complex term, Lautsinn, introduced.

From Chapter 7, "Medical Thinking and Moral Practice," the question of man's moral sense is elucidated in several sections, e.g., Thinking, a misunderstood faculty, Culture as 'animal domestication,' Darwin and Marx, Euthanasia today and Observing from the outside, observing from within, etc. From this latter section one is made aware that: "Anyone who observes our seriously handicapped patients from outside sees only what they have to offer those with no commitment to help; sensory perception reveals a defect syndrome. But if we develop a connection to these patients from within, through helpful involvement, we know on a daily basis who we are dealing with; we gain an inner perception of our patients that is not supported by outer sensory perception along..." (p. 292), and the author continues, but in a more spiritual vein—the higher "I" bestows the fit of its "I am" when we perceive the other individual with love. In the symbolic language of the Gospels, the archetypal human being, the one we strive toward in our will's deeper layers, undergoes death to live again in our love for each other" (p. 294).

"Among organisms, recognizing phenomena means extracting them from their perceptible manifestations and incorporating them into the movement of our thinking. Goethe calls this 'pure grasping of the phenomenon'" (p. 295).

This very-well-produced hardback contains many illustrations, graphs and several colored plates. There are thirty pages of notes but no index nor bibliography.

I offer the following quote from Dr. Peter Heusser's foreword to end this review:

"In Dr. Husemann, we experience an exemplary enlivening and humanizing of science and teaching...The need for evolution in this direction is all too obvious in undesirable developments of the present day. It is my hope that this new book will inspire many readers, especially the younger ones, to participate actively in this urgently needed shift toward living thinking in medicine." (p. xviii)

Several other works of note concerning AxM:

Compendium for the Remedial Treatment of Children, Adolescents, and Adults in Need of Soul Care: experiences and indications from anthroposophic therapy (2009; compiled by Bertram von Zabern), contains a wealth of material: one searches for something specific but soon finds that a half hour has passed. To enjoy these works and anthroposophy, in general, requires in my opinion, that one reside in, and have a firm belief in, the reality of spirit and spirituality. As a heart-felt example of this, I'll offer one of my own. "What! Small doses curing illness, that's impossible" was my initial opinion of homeopathy when I was but a young man of twenty. Little did I know, in five years, I would be totally involved and in love (if loving an inanimate object is possible) with the subject. That love came out of two things, the first being the most important -having learned yoga and discovered the reality of spirit and secondly, reading Vithoulkas' *The Science of Homeopathy*. It was the former, however, that did the most to change my perspective and thinking.

The chapters of this 170 page, 5" by 8" book are, 'Syndromes of Embryonic and Genetic Development,' Post-encephalitic syndrome, Psychotic conditions, Autism, Epilepsy, Hysteria, Neurasthenia, Sulfur-rich constitution, Sulfur-poor constitution, Constitutional sensory weakness, Maniacal children, Hydrocephaly, Microcephaly, Disturbances of brain nutrition, Sleep disturbances, Movement disorders, Speech disorders, Sensory perception disorders, Disorders of social behavior, Childhood milieu damage, Deformities, and Anxiety states. There are four appendices which deal with massage therapy, baths, art therapy and color shadow therapy. Treatment suggestions are indicated for every illness or syndrome and experiences by other practitioners is cited. There is a large bibliography at the end of each chapter. There is an adequate index.

An idea which is so much a part of AxM is the concept of processes. For instance, if, in the anemic patient, levels of iron are normal or even elevated the practitioner might attribute the anemia to a faulty 'iron' process. The ill person's system is not processing or has 'forgotten' how to carry out iron's role. Anthroposophic's therapeutics

would recommend a substance which reminds the body of how to carry out this process. This is similar to how we explain the workings of our remedies, isn't it, as 'the remedy holds-up a mirror to the body to remind how it needs to work or Be.' Somewhat analogous to this, is Steiner's comment concerning nutrition; paraphrased it goes something like this, 'It is not so much what one eats but how one eats.'

This book was originally produced as a spiral-bound book but is now offered, for about twenty dollars, as a perfect-bound paperback by www.steinerbooks.org (it was originally published by Mercury Press with ISBN 978-0-936132-29-7). Even if one doesn't fully understand Steiner's approach or his pharmacology -which has its origins in his highly developed clairvoyance, one's thinking is stimulated and broadened.

Another excellent and vibrant reference is editor Christa van Heek-van Tellingén's, 2007 treatise, *Vade Mecum: a handbook of Anthroposophic Medicine*. It too, is available from Steiner Books.

For history lovers see von Zabern's, *Early Beginnings of Anthroposophically Extended Medicine and Therapeutic Education in North America* (2021; isbn - 978-1-957569-09-3) which augments Henry Barnes' authoritative *Into the Heart's Land* (2005), as it serves up the history of the anthroposophical movement in the United States.

¹ "Anthroposophy is a path of knowledge to guide the Spiritual in the human being to the Spiritual in the universe" (Rudolf Steiner).

² Armin Husemann comes from a family of AxM doctors. The progenitor was Friedrich (1887–1959) who was very influential in forming the foundations of anthroposophically-oriented medicine in the 20th century. This influence is apparent in his trilogy, *The Anthroposophical Approach to Medicine*, 3 vols. (1982, 1987, 1989, respectively; 1st German, 1956; 2nd German, 1973), edited by Otto Wolff. Gisbert (1907-1997) is the younger brother of Friedrich and father of Friedwart (b. 1945) and Armin. Friedwart was, for some period of time, editor of *Der Merkurstab* an anthroposophical journal and wrote several books including *Truth and Love - Philosophy of Freedom and Christianity: Rudolf Steiner's Entwicklung* (1999) and, with Werner Prieve, *Friedrich Husemann* (2008), a biography. He has also written numerous articles.

Armin wrote the seminal *Harmony of The Body - Musical Principles in Human Physiology* (2003; translated by Christian von Armin, 1994; based on his German work, *Der Musikalische Bau des Menschen*, 2nd ed-1989). This fascinating book examines the mathematical symmetry between the human body and music, etcetera and is reviewed by Kevin Maher, M.D. in the *Journal of Anthroposophical Medicine*, 13:1, Spring, 1996. Armin's other books, *Human Hearing and the Reality of Music* (2015) and his latest offering *What Makes Blood Move? A Mind-Body Physiology of the Heart* (2022), are worthy of your time. This latter book is a remarkable study offering a veritable compost of vitality which will challenge even the most rigid materialist. Steiner Books has so much fertile material to offer. If they were savvy, they'd extend discounts to potential clients who wish to purchase several titles at one time.

In 1990, Armin edited a forty page pamphlet, *Knowledge of the Human Being Through Art: A Method of Anthroposophical Study*, which consists of quotes from Rudolf Steiner's lectures suggesting ways of

studying anthroposophy, i.e., "...to apprehend the human being as a four-fold entity having a physical body, an etheric body, an astral body and an ego-organization."-publisher's foreword).

³ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749 - 1832) was a German poet, playwright, novelist, scientist, statesman, theatre director, and critic. He wrote plays, poetry and various literature and works of a critical nature. He is regarded as one of the most influential writers in the German language and his works have had profound influences on the Western literary tradition. In the last decade or two he has become more appreciated and his thoughts on natural science and color theory have gained a wider audience.

Craig Holdrege is a modern proponent and interpreter of Goethean Science. He has written several helpful works which demystify, to some extent, Goethe's approach. See *Seeing the Animal Whole and Why It Matters* (2021), an excellent introduction to this subject. Another useful book is his *Thinking Like a Plant: a living science for life* (2013). See <https://www.natureinstitute.org>.

⁴ This volume of writings by Koenig (1902-1966) was compiled and edited by Richard Steel who is responsible for producing an entire series of books about or by Koenig. This 275 page volume offers, like the title says, an imaginative or heart-felt discourse on a number of animals, e.g., seals, penguins, salmon, eels, elephants, bears, dolphins, the horse ("our brother") and several varieties of birds. Koenig was a much respected clinician yet perhaps of greater importance was his founding of the Camphill Movement in Scotland during the decade of the 1940s. For an autobiography of this little known 'giant,' see *Karl Koenig: My Task, Autobiography and Biographies* (2008; edited by Peter Selg) and, the comprehensive biography written by his friend and colleague, Hans Müller-Wiedemann, *Karl Koenig: A Central-European Biography of the Twentieth Century* (1996). See <https://www.karlkoeniginstitute.org/en/> for further information.

⁵ Eurythmy a method of movement whose goal is "...to express in space the creative, formative forces behind the spoken, poetic word and musical tone." – Henry Barnes (*A Life for the Spirit*, 1997; p. 109).

This method or form of movement is based on Rudolf Steiner's anthroposophy. Here, healing occurs when movement is used in combination with sounds of speech or musical tones. Exercises have been developed for the digestive tract, the kidney and urinary systems, rheumatic illnesses, and heart and circulatory systems, etc.

"The art of eurythmy makes visible both speech and music by means of movement in which the whole body is engaged as an instrument." – Rene M. Querido.

Eurythmy is speech and music made visible through movement. It was developed by Rudolf Steiner at the turn of the 20th Century. What our larynx does when we vocalize, is recreated with the whole body, especially the arms and legs. Eurythmy can be used artistically, hygienically and therapeutically.

Videos of eurythmy being performed are available on YouTube.