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Health and healing in esotericism.

The Max Heindel (1865-1919) and the Rosicrucian Fellowship examples.

I have devoted part of my research to religious therapy, circumscribing within the religious field a domain which I typified and called “Healing Churches”.

The first religions in my sample, Invitation to life and Christian Science, are Christian. The others are not: Antoinism stems from spiritism, Universal Alliance from Georges Roux’s followers and Scientology’s doctrines seem to belong to esotericism.

For this reason, my interest in spiritual therapy was oriented towards esotericism, in order to assess the case of therapy and psyche within this “form of thought”. Of course, esotericism is not a healing religion since it is not a religion.

Esotericism is a transforming knowledge. It is perhaps a form of spirituality. In any case, the question arises when reading Max Heindel. Some deem it a path to salvation. Anyhow, I found in this author a link between esotericism and the triptych health/illness/healing. By healing I mean both healing others and the healing of oneself.

We find an organised outline of Heindel’s ideas on illness, health and healing under the title: *Hidden principles of Health and Healing (Max Heindel, 1994)* (In French : *santé et guérison*). In this stream, there is also A. Bailey’s, *Esoteric Healing*, (Bailey, 1976). But the case of Max Heindel is interesting because the source of healing centres remind us of current healing rooms of protestant evangelists and spiritualist’s dispensaries of the nineteenth century and thus an institutionalised application of his thought.

In this memorandum I will try to outline the characteristics of Heindel’s theory on illness, health and therapy as a first element of the assessment of esoteric medicine. I shall refer to another book of Max Heindel : *Desire Body (Max Heindel, 1993)*(in French : *Le corps du désir*) for this book present the esoteric anatomy of the human being in his teachings.

1) Max Heindel's bio-metaphysical conception of the body and its functioning.

All medicines are founded on philosophical theories. They are explicit in homeopathy or ayurvedic medicine and in other alternative unofficial medicines which are sometimes forced to prove their legitimacy. They are implicit in classic biochemical medicine which uses the scientific knowledge of the positivist thesis. In this case they are not quoted, since scientism of research in conventional medicine is part of the predominant Western ideology. It belongs to evidences which go unnoticed and conventional medicine is not summoned to recall the epistemological grounds on which it is based.

The esoteric medicine of Max Heindel has also philosophic foundations. On one hand, it accepts the gains of positive sciences of his time on illness, anatomy, physiology and on the other hand it is based on a conception of the universe which encompasses a history of the universe, of the earth and of mankind; as well as imaginary astrology, anatomy, physiology and metaphysical laws ruling man and the universe. In this bio-metaphysical system, we find all the functioning modes and correspondences of esoteric thinking stressed by A. Faivre (Faivre 1986) , Faivre, 1992) and J.P. Laurant (Laurant, 1993). We shall merely list the characteristics.

a) An imaginary anatomy added to biomedical anatomy.

The human being is endowed with several bodies. The body is not to be understood in the sense of classic anatomy, i.e. of individualised elements. It has to do with virtual realities, of realms and not of ensembles of organs and members related among them. If the physical body is under reach by sensing organs it is otherwise for the other bodies which are only perceptible by "seers". The latter see the body of desire as an "ovoid envelop spreading 40 or 50 centimetres out of the physical body" . (Heindel, 1993 : 45). Max Heindel depicts thus an aura.

For Max Heindel, the human being has:

1) A dense or material body, instrument of action ;

- 2) A vital body (the ethereal body of esotericism) which is a means of vitality;
- 3) A body of desire from which desire prompting to action stems;
- 4) A mind which refrains impulses and gives action a goal;
- 5) An ego which acts and gathers experience from action. The first joint two, form the physical body.

The body would contain “spiritual centres”. The text did not allow me to understand if they would correspond to the chakras of Indian imaginary anatomy that Max Heindel would have adopted for himself.

From a historical standpoint, the bodies are not original, they appeared during evolution. Thus the human spirit and the body of desire “started their evolution during the moon’s period” which puts them especially under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The process of this evolution is the divinisation of the human: we become human and later will become Gods. But within evolution the body is tied to personal development. Thus the desire body is born at the age of 14 and it marks “the beginning of self assertion” (Heindel, 1993, 40).

b) An imaginary physiology

In Max Heindel the universe acts and transforms itself with similar energy to the one outlined by Bergson in *Creative Evolution* (1907) and in the *Spiritual Energy* (1919). This energy which is a force, a fundamental drive (Trieb), is described in its specialisations, under the form of four *ethers* which are impalpable fluids (the chemical ether, the vital ether, the light ether and the reflecting ether).

These are the matrixes (Heindel, 1994: 48) of which the density and consistency determine the state of health. For example: chemical ether allows man to assimilate its food and to develop, but on another plane, the reflecting ether is ether of memory which stores up past experiences.

The vital fluid enters the body through the spleen, an organ (p. 48) considered this time, by official anatomy. There, its atoms penetrate into the physical body and make it vibrate. In Heindel's thesis as in Bailey's we find such links between the body of classic anatomy and the imaginary bodies superimposed onto it.

Moreover, Heindel displays a psychosomatic conception of biological functioning. According to him, the Ego directs all of the body's cells to put them in harmony (Heindel, 1994 : 116). Therefore, when the Ego is absorbed by something other than harmonious cell functioning, as for instance suffering, it does not produce harmony anymore, and this is the source of illness.

c) These bodies and this physiology are related to earthly worlds.

Thus there is on our earth:

- 1) The world of thought;
- 2) The world of desire;
- 3) The physical world (Heindel, 1994 : 19)

which are related within a system.

d) A notion of harmony

In this bio-metaphysical system, it appears that health results from several elements: Health is the outcome of harmony among all the components of the individual and cosmic harmony whereas in conventional medicine it is the result of a "harmony of biological and physiological parameters" such as cholesterol rate, and dysfunction indicators which should correspond to a whole, statistically balanced, i.e. that match "standard statistic intervals." Illness is a cosmobiological and a spiritual reality. As for Louis Antoine at the same period, sickness has the value of a "maiden" ordeal for it puts the person on the road to spiritual development.

Thus we read: "There are cases nevertheless, in which it is necessary to go through illness to make us change, but under these circumstances illness is a forerunner of a matching spiritual

development. Naturally, in this case, sickness should be considered as a blessing rather than a curse”. First of all, it stems from a lack of harmony, i.e. a non conformity with what we just described above. It might also stem from a karmic retribution. So Heindel affirms that it has been “acknowledged for a long time by researchers” that sight illnesses are caused by “extreme cruelty in a past life” (Heindel, 1994 : 85).

Nevertheless if illness is a consequence of past life’s acts, it is not a punishment, for God would not punish, and the illness would have pedagogical value. Pain and suffering would be meant to make us understand lessons that we couldn’t learn otherwise. (Heindel, 1994 : 207).

Max Heindel excludes hereditary causes because explaining behaviour by the “law of heredity” cancels liability and heredity would be used as an alibi for bad habits (Heindel, 1994 : 94). On the other hand, he thinks that illness can be caused by consuming alcohol and tobacco. Animal meat is considered as a poison, hence the advising of a vegetarian regime stressed by the metaphysical consideration: “One does not kill to eat” (Heindel, 1994 :135) and compassion for the fate animals in the slaughter house. We find the same ideas later, in Georges Roux’ “The Christ of Montfavet”.

As Louis Antoine at the same time, he advises not to consume industrially “falsified food” (Heindel, 1994 : 138). We see that life hygiene helps avoiding illness. We recognise the prevention methods of healing churches for which it is also important not to become ill. Max Heindel adds positive thinking as a precaution similar to the mental ascetics of Christian Science which consists in daily meditation to avoid “malicious mental poison.”

e) A healing method in agreement with cosmo-biology.

In this system, there are two sorts of remedies for illness:

+ At least those of classic medicine

+ At a higher level, those which lay mainly on the spiritual power called the universal panacea (Heindel, 1994 : 116).

In this health care as in the cure of Healing Churches, we find mediation. In Heindel's therapy, the healers (or brethren) convey to the patient the divine power which appears as a sort of manna for it "interpenetrates" the whole universe.

It "can always be used to heal all ills of any nature. It would destroy the "crystallising particles" which block the spiritual centres of the ill person (Heindel, 1994 : 117). This is for sure." (Heindel, 1994 :108) There are no limits to conveyed celestial power outside the receptivity of the patient.

This is summarised as follows: "There are three main factors in healing: The power of the Celestial Father, then the healer and in the end, the spirit of abidance of the ill person on whom the power of the Father can act through the healer to clear away all ills". (Heindel, 1994 : 107).

Besides the contributing mediation, we find the believing expectation of the patient; a draft of what psychoanalysts call the transference, confirmed when the author says that one should not insist when a person has more faith in classic medicine. Louis Antoine in the same period used to assert the same thing.

Healing stems from an act of faith which mobilises the patient and makes him the agent of his healing. Max Heindel makes a distinction between treating (act where the patient is passive) and healing (process where the patient is active). He differentiates an understanding of the "deep cause" from the application of a treatment which gives temporary results and requires faith.

For Heindel, this is the way the miracles of Jesus Christ, "the master healer" were obtained. Jesus would mobilise the power of the spirit to heal people who had faith in this power and as evidence, the author quotes chapter XIII of Saint Matthews' gospel: "And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief¹".

Divine Power is called "the Universal Panacea", (Heindel, 1994 : 116). It would be sent by God to heal man as Jesus Christ would have been sent by God to save mankind. This "spiritual essence" is sent to the individual and it gives a

¹ The Book of Matthew, 13. 58. King James version of the Bible.

thrust to the ego upset by suffering so that it would pull itself back together and retake control of the cells to re-establish harmonious physical functioning.

All this is only possible because of the particular characteristic of the human mind (here the Ego) of having power over the body. Moreover therapy does not only aim to heal the individual; oddly enough it participates to the spiritual evolution of mankind by helping the liberation of Jesus Christ imprisoned in the world.

In fact for Max Heindel, Jesus Christ is currently imprisoned on earth on our behalf and he bears this heavy burden to ensure proper conditions to our evolution (Heindel, 1994 : 213). Human suffering makes suffer Jesus Christ who dwells in earth to suffer for humans beings. Therefore by alleviating the suffering of human beings, the healer alleviates Christ's suffering and hastens the day of his liberation (Heindel, 1994 : 214), i.e. the day when Jesus Christ could leave this Earth because men will no longer need his compassion.

Max Heindel does not say if this applies to conventional doctors, but nothing prevents applying to them the spiritual consequences of their endeavour. Therapy would go beyond the individual plane and would be part of a plan for the spiritual evolution and perhaps the salvation of mankind.

Max Heindel finds a healing virtue in fasting, "means of healing and factor of spiritual growth" (Heindel, 1994 : 142).

2) Max Heindel's modus operandi of the esoteric cure

How can a patient benefit from the Universal Panacea?

As we have demonstrated it in the study of the modus operandi of religious therapy, healing operates from transference. Max Heindel acknowledges the need for the commitment of the ill person, as did Louis Antoine founder of Antoinism in the same period.

He writes: "if on the contrary, the ill person does not believe in the healing power of the healer, it would be better to call a doctor whom he'll trust, because health and illness depend greatly on the state of mind of the person who suffers" (Heindel, 1994 : 200-201). He does not disapprove of conventional medicine; he even accepts the use of medical drugs;

One of the means to commit patients to their cure, to occupy them in their healing, is to ask them to write the description of their symptoms to

the *Elder Brethren* (the healers) of Mount Ecclesia's Centre (CAL) temple monitoring the cure. On the other hand he refuses vaccines, considered as poison. Another esoteric: Alice Bailey, in 1934, didn't see any valuable motif to refuse vaccination since the body receives many poisons which do not hinder spiritual evolution.

I said above that the cure is a contributing mediation. In the image of what Jesus Christ² would have done, healers must "call", receive and transmit a force, a power which heals by re-establishing the body's harmony in itself, but also its harmony with the cosmos.

A bridge must be stretched between higher and inferior planes. Max Heindel puts it this way: "When Jesus Christ was on earth and healed the ill, he, being the Lord of the Sun, would incorporate the synthesis of stellar vibrations as the octave sums up the whole scale; thus, he could emit by himself the planetary corrective influence applicable in each case. He perceived the disharmony and because of his superior development knew at once what was needed to compensate" (Heindel, 1994 : 153-154).

Unlike today's healers Jesus Christ didn't need to awake a healing power. "He didn't need beforehand preparation, but he would obtain immediate results by replacing with harmony the planetary discord causing the illness he wanted to heal.

Only once he stood behind superior law by saying: "Arise, thy sins shall be forgiven" (Heindel, 1994 :154). Jesus Christ impregnated with superior law, thus with divine power could heal by re-establishing a harmony which is not limited by biological harmony but has to do also with cosmic harmony which contributes to the functioning of both body and psyche.

We are well in a bio-cosmic conception of the human being and the treatment can be qualified as such. The cure goes also through an astrological diagnosis of the ill person since "Rosicrucian healing methods depend on knowledge of planetary dissonances which are the

² He is also called: "the master healer" as in healing churches.

cause of the illness, and on knowledge of the influence which will remedy this discord” (Heindel, 1994 : 154).

It is then question of astro-therapy which would be as useful as according to its laws of compatibility and receptivity, the sick person would heal with less effort under favourable stellar positions.

Therefore, the healers establish the astrological theme of the patient and then knowing the illness, they go into a state of receptivity through devotional exercises. The latter are the most efficient means to get into harmony with Jesus Christ.

Their practice leads to a gift of intuition which allows perceiving the suffering of others while finding a way to give them solace.

(Heindel, 1994 : 214). Devotional exercises consist in reading passages of the Gospel narrating the healings of Jesus Christ, of the Imitation of Jesus Christ by Thomas Kempis. They comprise also the apprehension of anatomy from a spiritual viewpoint as in Frederick Rossiter’s *Romance of a living Temple*. (Rossiter, 1902). The cure is free. Healers abide by a moral code forbidding to discourage the ill person or to predict his death. We find here a hint of what in psychoanalysis has been called counter-transference.

According to Heindel, an ill therapist should not attend healing meetings since a mention of common symptoms with the patient could only worsen them. We find here the idea of a resonance between the patient and the therapist which is one of the questions of psychoanalytical practice.

Why heal? Heindel points out that from occultism’s point of view the fact that we live or die is irrelevant, for death does not mean annihilation but merely a change of awareness towards other spheres. Prolonging the life of the vehicle which is the body permits to gather experiences and extends one’s spiritual development on earth. (Heindel, 1994 : 91). The act of healing is thus made relative. Life is important, health also, but they come after spiritual development.

In fact, a sick person could invoke energy himself. Physical illness can be defeated by spiritual power, but in Heindel's conception, there is a notion of "amount of power," union of powers introduced by the social element. An ill person receives aid from a group of individuals; "the Elder Brethren" at the chapel of Mount Ecclesia. They are approved by the Rosicrucian Fellowship, which appeals to them and does all that is needed to favour their ongoing healing endeavour.

These brethren are aided worldwide by Rosicrucian who put their thoughts in unison at a time called 18H30 regardless of time zones, for thought is a fluid transmitted throughout the planet which will reach its aim.

Max Heindel depicts the first healing meeting of June 23, 1914 at 19h30 at the Head Quarters of the Rosicrucian Fellowship in Mount Ecclesia's Chapel (Heindel, 1994 : 19). The service was repeated each week when the moon would be in cardinal signs.

June 23 was close to the summer's solstice. From December 25 to June 25 "activities on the physical plane tend to predominate and they increase gradually in power until their climax at the summer's solstice. "At this moment man is blessed in his material life and receives all he needs for his physical survival". That is why this date was chosen.

The number of people would increase spiritual power in a geometric progression. At that time, Rosicrucians aim their thoughts towards the Temple's Chapel, where the symbol of the invisible aids is unveiled to help the "Healing Brethren of the Temple" regardless of time zones, for the sun's rays carry thoughts to the chosen place. Nothing is said on the healing tools. Max Heindel does not mention prayer, but meditation on the symbol of the Rosi+Cross.

Conclusion.

In my conclusion, I would make three remarks. 1) The esoteric teaching of Max Heindel about the body, the health, the illness and the spiritual cure of the illnesses is not quite original. The alchemists researched the universal panacea which was spiritual and material. The

philosopher stone was also a universal panacea. On the other hand, one find an imaginary anatomy and a fancy physiology in the teachings of H.P. Blavastky (1831-1891) who precede a little Max Heindel. At the same time, Steiner (1861-1925) let the same type of description of the human being. 2) In my article, I have emphasize the analogies between the Healing Churches, the healing rooms, the medium healer centres of the spirits in the nineteenth century and the Healing Centres of the Rosicrucian Fellowship. 3) Finally, I would say that one find many aspects of this esotericism in the New Age. But this remark is not also original. Massimo Introvigne (Introvigne, 2005) discussed it five years ago.

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Notes:

- (1) Cf. (www.ineh.org). The International Network of Esoteric Healing (INEH) is a group of people dedicated to the practice and study of Esoteric Healing. The work is largely based on the teachings of Djwhal Khul as presented in the book *Esoteric Healing* by Alice Bailey which describes the seven ray techniques of healing, the psychological and karmic causes of disease, the laws and rules of healing and the process of death and restitution. Through meditation, Esoteric Healing uses triangles of etheric energy relating the centres and the endocrine system in order to

release the unimpeded flow of the life principle and soul energy which can lead to wholeness and healing.

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