

The Human Heart, a Source of Light, Life and Love

Facilitator: Dr. Branko Furst

Most of us are familiar with the abstract notion that what streams to the earth from the sun as a source of warmth, light and life, also radiates on a microcosmic scale from the beating heart. The question can be asked whether these high-faulting, even poetic ideas have anything to do with the actual physiological processes? While a living connection between the cosmic and the human heart was a matter of semiconscious, dream-like experience for the peoples of ancient India, Persia and Egypt, and was at the core of Hippocratic teachings, this knowledge gradually sunk into the depths of the unconscious.

However, with the advent of the consciousness soul, since the beginning of the 16th century these ideas surfaced again, albeit in a materialistic, intellectual form. Thus, a new vision of the human being arose, no longer rooted in atavistic clairvoyance but based on exact anatomical dissection and interpreted in view of the emerging empirical sciences of physics and chemistry.

A sizable library of research has since been written on the topic of the cardiovascular physiology alone, however, the intuitive wisdom that shone from the ancients is nowhere to be found. In its place we are left with a reductionist image of the human being which obscures its essence, denies freedom, and hastens the disintegration of the social organism.

Fortunately, a voluminous research based on Goethean method has been given to us by Rudolf Steiner through the anthroposophically extended science of the spirit. It encompasses the evolution of humanity in its earthly and cosmic aspects and sheds new light on every detail of its existence. It is our task to examine the findings of contemporary science and medicine, validate what stands up to the rigor of the spiritual-scientific investigations, and thus help build a truer image of the human being.

For example, while the excess warmth produced by the heart is dismissed by physiology as "wasted heat", a mere "mechanical inefficiency of the pump", we are given to understand on the basis of spiritual-scientific research that warmth generated by the heart is a bridge between the physical-etheric and the soul-spiritual members of the human being. Since the mechanistic thinking can grasp only what is of physical-chemical nature, the qualities of life, let alone of light and love, radiating from the human heart, simply cannot be addressed by the conventional paradigm. However, the great physiological dogma that the heart is a source of blood propulsion has recently been overturned purely on phenomenological grounds. It is amply supported by examples from experimental physiology and clinical medicine. Having unburdened the heart of the task it does NOT perform; the door has now been opened to explore body, soul, and spirit as the basis for a truly human physiology.

The aim of this workshop is to outline the seminal research which connects the conventional knowledge with the anthroposophical understanding of the heart and circulation. Participants are encouraged to bring their questions.

Section Affiliation: Medical Section

Number of Participants: 20 – 30

Dr. Branko Furst



Prof. Branko Furst, MD, FFARCSI is a graduate of the University of Ljubljana Medical School, Slovenia and completed residency in anesthesiology in Portsmouth and London, UK. The pursuit of an academic career took him to the US (1987) where he joined the faculty at the department of Anesthesiology at Texas Tech University Medical School in El Paso, Texas. Since 1993 he was on the faculty at Albany Medical College and retired from clinical duties in Oct. 2021.

His main research interest is in building the bridge between the conventional and anthroposophical understanding of the human being. He has authored several peer reviewed articles and a monograph *The Heart and Circulation – An Integrative Model*, currently in its 2nd edition. He has lectured on anthroposophical themes and aspects of circulation to professional and lay audiences in the US and internationally.

Contact Person: Branko Furst, bfurst@berk.com

Sunday, August 13

- 11:30 am** **WTF1** The Human Heart, a Source of Light, Life and Love I
Dr. Branko Furst, Medical Section
- 3:00 pm** **WTF2** The Human Heart, a Source of Light, Life and Love II
Dr. Branko Furst, Medical Section