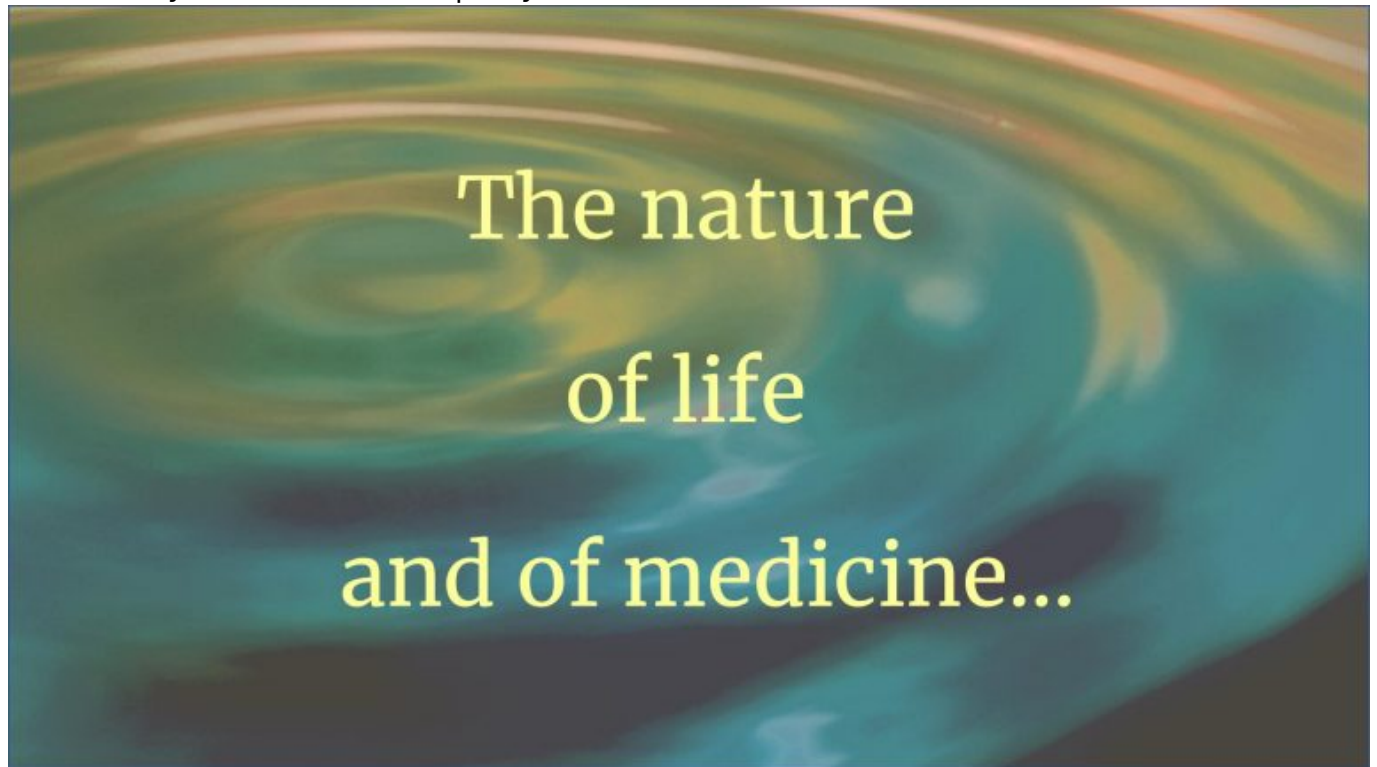


A Short Explanation of Everything

Category: Poems

written by Daniel Becker | May 15, 2020



Our patient says she's *burning up, burning up*.
We sponge her off. This student is learning how blood boils,
how shaking chills and drenching sweats punctuate fever,
how water moves in and out of cells
along concentration gradients, how nerves talk,
how some circuits turn all the lights on and all the lights off,
how hearts beat one cell at a time while squeezing together
and in sequence, how the life of the mind
is beyond understanding in the same way that a kidney
will never understand the flow of urine,
how sleep is not as simple as it looks.
During general anesthesia the operating room enjoys music.

The surgeon whistles as she sews.
The patient will wonder, *Where did that tune come from?*
Broadway most likely.
Between all we know and remember and forget and forget we forgot
or sometimes just sleep through; beyond the day-to-day cogitation
that adds or subtracts or instructs or confuses, that powers leaps of faith
and plans escape routes, that registers to vote and then votes:
there's a fine line, a user interface, a membrane,
and what is a membrane if not for its pores?
With each generation the explanations get thinner and thinner.
Ion channels let the insides know the outsides.
We're two-thirds water. Take us to the river
and we'll displace our weight in water,

floating this way or that.
The current explains which direction.