

VACCINATION

**in the work of
RUDOLF STEINER**



Edited and Translated by Daniel Hindes

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Dedication

I would like to thank Stephanie Hindes for her help and feedback in editing and proofing the text, and Gene Gollogly for his encouragement.

Introduction

In the case of vaccination there is considerably less material in the Collected Works than there is for viral illnesses and epidemics.¹ What material does exist is ambiguous for two reasons. The first is that the German word for *vaccination* is exactly the same as the word for injection. Etymologically we can understand quite easily the reason for this. The first vaccinations were injections, and these injections conferred immunity when undertaken prophylactically. Even into the 21st century, in common usage German does not employ a separate word for the distinct procedures of injecting a substance for any other reason, or an injection for the purpose of inoculation. German usage has, in more recent years, borrowed the word *vakzination* from the English, but this was not common usage during Steiner's time. He used it exactly once in the Collected Works, while talking to medical doctors. Yet he talked extensively about the processes underlying vaccination to many audiences.

The second challenge consists of the fact that in Steiner's view of healing, there is not much difference between a remedy created to cure a condition, and one to be used prophylactically. That is, when Steiner was developing the anthroposophical pharmacopoeia, it did not matter to him when in the disease cycle the remedy was employed. If someone was susceptible to hay fever, they could take the remedy prophylactically before they had symptoms. This would technically make the remedy a vaccine, especially when injected for that purpose. In the case of the hay fever remedy, as with many other remedies invented by Steiner, it *is* actually injected. As Steiner also emphasized, it was not the particular substances that were important to his remedies, it was how they were used and how they were introduced into the body. And he gives a variety of options for differing effects: intravenous injection, subcutaneous injection, baths, oil rubs, oral ingestion, and vapor inhalation, among others.

Steiner's entire view of medicine and the human body is fundamentally different from the modern materialist conception that underlies 21st century medicine. He develops his views at great length in multiple cycles of lectures, as well as incidentally throughout the *Collected Works*, and also in courses held specifically for medical students and practicing doctors. This book examines how Steiner approached the subject of vaccination, and does not include a complete survey of his insights into the entire medical field.

The book is divided into three parts. It leads off with a full-length lecture from Steiner's early theosophical work on the nature of illness and death. There follows a lecture excerpt on medicine and how medicine can be renewed and improved by a spiritual worldview and then a newsletter article. The lectures mention several novel instances of healing by injection. This section should give the reader a general sense for how Steiner approached healing and medicine in general.

The second section contains passages from Steiner's members-only lectures to the Theosophical and later Anthroposophical Society. These members-only lectures contain terminology that might otherwise be foreign to a first-time reader. I have tried to introduce a little bit of context in the footnotes, but this is no substitute for a deeper understanding as can be gained by reading Steiner's books in their entirety. In contrast to the initial lectures, this section presupposed a familiarity with Steiner's worldview, which he had been presenting at that time for a number of years, and which even today the interested reader can master by carefully reading two volumes: *Theosophy* and *Occult Science*. This section also contains an extended passage on the ethics of modern medicine as they pertain to vaccination during epidemics.

The third section contains passages from the time when Steiner was working intensively as an advisor to doctors at a medical clinic and was developing an alternative approach to healing in collaboration with multiple fully-trained conventional doctors. This section also includes a reference to an attempt to create a vaccine or remedy (it is not clear Steiner himself saw a difference) for foot-and-mouth-disease in cattle, which Steiner undertook in collaboration with a licensed veterinarian, as well as descriptions of other remedies that are both indicative of Steiner's approach in general, and specifically mention injections or vaccination.

It is my hope that this selection, which includes every reference in the *Collected Works* to the injection of substances, the build-up of resistance, and healing by injection, will give the interested reader some insight into Rudolf Steiner's thinking on the subject of vaccination. May this book serve as material for independent thought and reflection to aid readers in making their own informed decisions, as Steiner would have wanted.

Daniel Hindes
Longmont, CO
February, 2021

Translator's Note

The etymology of the word “vaccine” is interesting. *Variolation*, the practice of piercing a ripe smallpox pustule on a sick person and inserting the resulting liquid under the skin of a healthy person, was widely practiced outside of Europe since antiquity and was widespread within Europe by the 1600s. The only down-side: the healthy recipient stood about a two percent chance of contracting a full-blown case of smallpox and possibly sickening their immediate companions, and a smaller chance of possibly dying in the process. In the very late 1700s, English physician Edward Jenner began experimenting with secretions of cowpox pustules from humans applied to other humans as an inoculation against the related, but much more deadly smallpox. The idea came from examining the folk wisdom that milk maids had clear skin, without any pockmarks. Investigations eventually showed that anyone who contracted the milder cowpox and survived was immune from the more virulent smallpox for life. Jenner began inoculating people with an inactivated cowpox pustule extract, by the same means as the smallpox variolation was delivered, and eventually established that this method, too, conferred immunity and at much lower risk.² The Latin word for cow is *vacca*; cowpox was known in the medical literature of the time as *vaccainania*. The adjectival form of cow (that is, *pertaining to cows*) is *vaccinae*, also written *vaccine* from which we get the word that Jenner used to name his injections. The new term quickly became widespread in English usage as the practice caught on.

As Jenner's method spread to Germany in the early 1800s, the preferred term was *Impfen*, a usage that was carried over from the practice of variolation. In the German-speaking Central Europe they updated the substance, but maintained the old term for the process. In both cases the practice was the same—injection. The fact that the literal injection of a vaccinating substance uses exactly the same term as the metaphorical process of inserting something into something else (to inject) presents special difficulties for translators of Steiner's work, since it is not always clear which of these meanings Steiner intends. Of course, English usage follows the same convention, using “inject” indiscriminately in exactly the same way as in German. But that does not help us isolate the literal from the metaphorical procedure in a search of the Collected Works, nor does it clarify when Steiner meant injection, and when he meant vaccination.

For vaccination, modern English-German dictionaries give *impfen* as the primary or common term, *vakzination* as a term among specialists in the field of medicine, and alternatives as *Impfstoffgabe*—literally: delivery of material by injection, or delivery of injectable substance (though any competent translator would simply use the word vaccination)—and *Schutzimpfung* (protective injection). None of these alternatives occur in the Collected Works of Rudolf Steiner, though there are six instances of the reverse construction: *Impfschutz*—protection by means of an injection with the word order switched, something that German allows for. So looking only for terms that exclusively indicate vaccination, and those alone, yields very few references. If we stopped with these, we would be overlooking a lot of relevant material. Instead we must look at every instance of *impfen* (verb: to inject) and *Impfung* (noun: Injection) as well as the root *impf* in any position in a word, as well as potentially related terms such as immune and immunity (*immune* and *Immunität*).

The German word *impfen* is a word that Steiner particularly enjoyed; it shows frequently in the Collected Works, usually in verb form, and often employed metaphorically. Spiritual beings inject a capacity into other developing beings. Evil is injected into the world by spiritual processes. In the end I had to read through all 136 instances and decide when the topic pertained to vaccination. I have in general omitted these metaphorical instances of the word *inject*, as they clearly have no bearing on the question of Steiner's views on vaccines. When the passages plausibly could be construed as having some bearing on the question of prophylactic inoculation, I have included them in this book. Ambiguities in the translation of this specific term are noted in the footnotes. This is more frequent than I would have liked, because the best translation for *impfen* moves around based on context. The footnotes, while to some perhaps tedious, allow the reader to audit my translation. I have footnoted the original German term only for this one word, and only because it is central to the topic of this book.

The name Helene Finckh shows up as the stenographer for a number of these excerpts, so readers may be curious about her background. She was born in 1883 in the southern German city of Stuttgart and grew up the second of eight children of a postal worker. The death of her father forced her into the workforce at a young age, and she became an expert stenographer, winning prizes and eventually teaching the subject. She encountered theosophy, and met and married a young architect named Erich. They were active in anthroposophical circles after 1912. At the outbreak of the World War I Erich was drafted, and killed in action in the first weeks of the war. Helene found herself in Dornach in the summer of 1915, where she stepped in to stenograph a Steiner lecture when the other stenographer was unexpectedly unavailable. Steiner liked the results so much that he appointed her official stenographer, and she went on to record almost 2,500 of his lectures over the next nine years, sometimes as many as five in a day. She is thus responsible for about half the lecture transcripts available. Her workflow involved sitting behind a screen a little ways behind Steiner on the stage, so she could only hear him and was not otherwise distracted. She would notate the sounds in a continuous stream, pencil on paper using standard stenographic notation, and then in the evening reconstruct the notations (the stenogram) into a typed re-construction. She typically produced the reconstruction the same day as the original lectures. In addition, she typed up meeting minutes and correspondence for Steiner. After Steiner's death in 1925 she worked as Marie Steiner's personal secretary. They would collaborate on editing the stenographic reconstruction by adjusting sentence punctuation and paragraph breaks, proofing proper names and other references, and ultimately producing the final printed version. They produced volume after volume of these lecture publications up to Marie's death in 1948. Thereafter she was employed by the Rudolf Steiner Archive in Dornach where she organized the stenograms, original reconstructions, and other archival material. She retired to her birth town of Stuttgart, where she died in 1960.

Public Lectures and Articles

How are We to Understand Illness and Death?

This lecture was held on the 13th of December, 1906 in Berlin. It was held as part of a regular series to create interest in the Theosophical Society, of which Steiner was then General Secretary of the German National Chapter. It was open to the general public and advertised in local newspapers. Anyone could wander in off the street to listen to this lecture and others like it. Members impressed with Steiner could likewise bring their friends and acquaintances to such public lectures. Quite a few of Steiner's early followers first encountered him and his work in such public lectures. An equal or greater number of people listened to them and concluded that theosophy was not for them. These public lecturers were given catchy titles designed to awaken interest among the general public.

The lecture is contained in CW 55. It was reconstructed by the editors from various listeners' notes. The lecture was first published as a pamphlet in 1952 and then collected with other public lectures into book form in 1959. The translation was made from the unrevised 1983 second German edition.

Steiner:

Today we are dealing with a subject that is undoubtedly close to everyone's heart, because the two words "illness and death" express something that enters every life, often like an uninvited guest, but often also as something tormenting, oppressive, and frightening. Yes, death itself poses the greatest question in the mystery of existence. When someone has solved the question of the meaning of death, then for them the question of the nature of life has also been solved. You often hear people say: Death is a riddle, no one has solved it yet and no one will ever solve it. People who say such things do not even suspect what immodesty lies in these words; they do not even suspect that there is a solution to such riddles and that they simply do not understand it. Today, when we are dealing with such an all-encompassing significant topic, I ask you to pay special attention to the fact that this presentation cannot be anything else than an answer to the question posed: How does one conceive of illness and death? Therefore, we will not digress into specialized questions about specific diseases or health in general, but must by and large stick to the question: How do you gain an understanding of these two important questions of our existence?

The best-known answer to the question of the nature of death, which has been valid for centuries but that today has lost its value for the vast majority of educated mankind, is found in the words of Paul: "For the wages of sin is death."³ For many centuries these words served as a sort of solution to the riddle of death. Today, anyone who thinks in the modern sense will not be able to do anything at all with such an answer. The idea that sin, something completely of the moral realm, something purely in the nature of human behavior, could be the cause of a biological reality such as death—that sin should somehow be connected with the nature of disease—that is quite unfathomable to a modern thinker.

It will perhaps still be useful to us if we also point out that our present age no longer even understands the meaning of the sentence: “For the wages of sin is death.” For by *sin* Paul and those who lived in his time understood something quite different from what is understood today by modern philistines. What is meant here by the term *sin* is not a transgression in the usual sense, not even a transgression of a some particularly egregious sort. Rather, by *sin* they understood that which arises from selfishness and egoism. Everything that has selfishness and egoism as its impetus of action—in contrast to that which arises from objective impulses—is sin. Egoism, selfish action, however, presupposes that the human being has become independent, I-conscious. This must be recognized, if you completely immerse yourself in the way of thinking of a spirit such as Paul.

Whoever does not remain at a superficial level of understanding the Old and New Testaments, but really penetrates into the spirit of these works, knows that a very specific (you could say natural philosophical) way of thinking forms the undercurrent of this Old and New Testament way of thinking. This undercurrent can be expressed approximately as follows: Everything that is present in the world as created life, directs itself toward a quite specific aim. The lower beings are still neutral as far as pleasure and suffering, joy and pain. We then notice how, as life increases, something becomes connected with it. Whoever shudders when the concept of purpose, of the purposefulness of life is spoke of, should consider that this is not a thought-out concept, but a pure fact: the whole kingdom of living beings up to the human approaches a certain reality, one that is revealed in the fact that at the pinnacle of living beings is one in which a personal consciousness is possible.

The initiates of the Old and New Testaments looked down into the kingdom of the animals and saw how everything strives towards the possibility that ultimately a free personality can come into being. A personality that can have drives and impulses towards acting out of itself. They further see how the nature of such a personality is connected with what you might call the possibility of egoistic, selfish action. Now, however, a thinker like Paul would say: If such a personality dwells in a body, which is capable of acting egoistically, then this body must needs be mortal.

A soul with independence, self-consciousness, and consequently also with egoism would never be able to dwell in an immortal body. These therefore belong together: a mortal body and a soul with consciousness of an individual personal self and the concomitant one-sided formation of personal impulses of action. This is what the Bible calls *sin*, and this is how Paul defines: "Death is the wages of sin." In this example you see that we must modify the statement. Because like every other saying of the Bible it has been completely inverted into its opposite over the course of the centuries. If we modify them, not by reinterpreting them, but by realizing that we are transforming the present meaning given by theology into the original one, we see from this that we are often dealing with a very profound conception of the matter, which is not so far from what we can understand again today. This is a necessary correction.

But the thinkers, the worldview researchers of all ages, have dealt with the question of the riddle of death, and we find this question answered across the millennia in the most diverse ways. This is not the place for a comprehensive survey of the history of all such solutions. However, I will point out two thinkers, so that you can see how even thinkers who are quite close to the present time do not know how to contribute anything substantial to this question. One is Schopenhauer. You all know his pessimistic way of thinking, and whoever has once gone through the sentence: "Life is a miserable thing, and I have resolved to spend mine by thinking about it"⁴ - will understand that Schopenhauer hardly came to any other solution than this: Actually death is a consolation for life, and life a consolation for death. Life is fatal, and you could not even bear it if you did not know that death would end it. If you have a fear of death, then you only need to realize that life is not in any way better, and that nothing further is decided by death. This is his pessimistic way of thinking, which he only transcends once, when he lets the earth spirit say, "You desire for new life to continually arise; I need space for that." So Schopenhauer sees in the fact that life reproduces itself, always gives birth to new life, the necessity that the old must die, so that there is room for the new. Otherwise, Schopenhauer does not know how to put forward anything significant; for everything else he says stews in these words.

The other is Eduard von Hartmann. In his last book⁵ he dealt with the riddle of death. He says there: If we look at the highest living beings, we find that among humanity, after one or two new generations have come up, they no longer understand the world. When a person has grown old, they can no longer grasp youth, therefore it is necessary that the old die off and new things come forth again. In any case, you do not see any answer to these questions that could bring us closer to the riddle of death with real understanding in Hartmann either.

So we would like to offer to today's world view what the so-called spiritual science, which is also called anthroposophy, has to say about the causes of death and illness. But we want to make one thing clear: spiritual science does not have it as easy as other sciences that get to speak about everything in a unified way. The natural scientist of today would not understand that, when speaking about illness and death, you have to distinguish between animals and human beings. However, if you want to understand the question of today's lecture, you will have to limit yourself to the phenomena in human beings. Since various beings have not only some abstract "sameness" with each other, but also each has its essential and its unique elements, only some of what is said today will be applicable also to the animal kingdom, perhaps also to the plants. However, we will speak primarily about human beings, and the others will be referred to only if they are to clarify something.

If we want to understand death and illness in the human being, we must first of all see that the human being in the sense of spiritual science is a highly complicated being and that we must understand them according to their nature from the following four members. First we have the outwardly visible physical body, second the etheric or life body, then the astral body, and fourthly the ego, or the center of our being. Then we must be clear that the same forces and substances are present in the physical body as in the physical world outside, and that in the etheric body lies that which calls these substances to life, and that the human being has its etheric body in common with the whole plant world. The astral body, which the human being has in common with the animals, is the bearer of the whole emotional life, of desires, pleasure and displeasure, joy and pain. The human being alone possesses an ego, which makes it the crown of the Earth's creation.

If we have the human being before us as a physical organism, then we must realize that within this physical organism the three other members work as shapers and architects. The physical principle works only partially on the physical organism of the human being, in another part the etheric body is essentially active, again in another the astral body, and again in another part of the human being the ego is active. For spiritual science the human being consists physically first of all of bones, and muscles—those organs which support the human being, make them a solid structure walking on the earth; these alone are counted in the strictest sense of spiritual science as the part of the organs brought about by the physical principle. In addition, there are the actual sense organs. Here we have to deal with physical apparatuses; with the eye as a kind of camera obscura and with the ear as a very complicated musical instrument. Now it depends on what these organs are built of. They are built by the first principle. On the other hand, all organs connected with growth, reproduction, digestion, etc., are built not only in the sense of the physical principle, but in the sense of the etheric or life body, which also permeates the physical organs. Only the lawful construction is taken care of by the physical principle, the process of digestion, reproduction, and growth, on the other hand, is taken care of by the etheric principle. The astral body is the creator of the whole nervous system, up to the brain and the strands that go to the brain in the form of sensory nerve strands. The ego, finally, is the architect of the circulation of the blood. If, therefore, we have before us a human organism in a genuinely spiritual-scientific sense, we are clear that these four members—even in the externally perceptible organism—have actually merged and been made effective together like four individual entities within the human being that are quite distinct from one another. These members, which compose the human organism, are of quite different value, and we shall understand their significance for the human being when we investigate how our development is connected with these individual members.

Today we will discuss more from the physiological point of view the work of the physical principle in the human organism. This unfolds in the period from birth to the change of teeth. There the physical principle works on the physical body in the same way as the forces and substances of the maternal organism work on the embryo of the child before the child is born. From the seventh year until sexual maturity the etheric principle works mainly on the physical body, and from sexual maturity on the forces anchored within the astral body work. In order to imagine the development of the human being correctly, we ought to think that the human being is enclosed by the body of the mother until birth. With birth the child pushes back, as it were, the maternal body, their senses become free, and now it is possible that the outer world begins to act upon the human organism. Around age seven, the human being also pushes a shell away from itself, and only someone who correctly understands the development of the human being also understands that something similar is going on during the time of the change of teeth, not in the physical, but in the spiritual life. Around the seventh year the human being is born a second time. Around age seven the etheric body is born for free activity, as the physical body was at the time of birth. Just as physically the mother's womb works on the human embryo in the time before birth, so the spiritual forces of the world-ether work on the etheric body until the change of teeth, and they are pushed back around the seventh year just as the mother's womb is pushed back at the physical birth. Until the seventh year the etheric body lies as if latent in the physical body. The etheric body is like a match set on fire around the time of the change of teeth. It is bound in the physical body and now comes out for its own, free, independent activity. And the sign by which this free activity of the etheric body is announced is precisely the change of teeth. The change of teeth is very significant for those who look deeper into the nature of the human being. If we have a human being before us up to the seventh year, the physical principle works freely in the physical body; but the etheric and astral principles are as bound and not yet born out of their spiritual shells.

If we look at a human being up to the seventh year, they contain a whole sum of hereditary facts, which they did not build with their own principle, but which they inherited from their ancestors. To this belongs what are called the milk teeth, or baby teeth. Only those teeth that come after the change of teeth are the creation of that individual principle, which is predisposed to form this solid foundation in the physical. They are the individual creation of the personal etheric principle. What comes to expression in the teeth is creative up to the change of teeth only inwardly, and at the end of its effectiveness it forms, as it were, the culminating process. It generates the hardest part of the supporting organism in the teeth, because it still holds bound within itself the etheric or life body as a carrier of growth. After this principle has been repelled, the etheric body becomes free and now works on the physical organs until sexual maturity, and then a sheath, the outer astral sheath, is pushed away just as the mother's sheath is pushed away at birth. Astrally, the human being is born for the third time at sexual maturity. And the active forces, which were bound in the etheric body, now make the final point for their mode of creation in the human being by producing the faculty of sexual maturity, of reproduction, and these organs. Just as the physical principle culminates in the seventh year in the teeth and by creating the final, densest and hardest organs, and thereby the etheric body—the growth principle—becomes free, so the astral principle, at the moment when it becomes free, creates the strongest concentration of the drives and desires, of the expression of life, in so far as we are dealing with physical nature. Just as you have the physical principle concentrated in the teeth, so the growth principle is concentrated in sexual maturity. With this the astral body, the envelopment of the ego, is free, and the ego now works on the astral body.

The European person of culture does not merely follow their instincts and desires; they have purified and transformed these into moral feelings and ethical ideals. If we now compare a primitive person⁶ with an average European, or even with Schiller or Francis of Assisi, we can say what differentiates the latter that they have transformed, purified their drives by means of their ego. Thus we can say to ourselves that this astral body always contains two parts: one that comes from its own original disposition, and one that the ego itself has given birth to.

Now we understand the work of the ego only when we realize that the human being is subject to re-embodiment—repeated earth lives; that when the human being is born they bring with them, as it were—in four bodies divided from each other—the fruits and results of earlier Earth lives, which are there as a measure of the energy and power in their life. One human being is born a particular way because they were able to transform their astral body with a lot of life energy, with strong forces. The other will soon slacken in this effort. If you clairvoyantly examine how the ego begins to work independently on the astral body, to control the desires, urges and passions by means of the ego, then, if you are able to indicate the measure of energy which the ego has brought with it, you could say: this amount is so large that the ego will be able to work so and so long on the transformation of itself and no longer. And after the time of sexual maturity there is such a measure for every human being by which you could measure, and would indicate how long it will take for them to have worked out everything from their astral body according to the energy allotted to them in this life. What the human being is thus able to transform and purify in their soul, they preserve. As long as this measure is sufficient, they live at the expense of the carried-over astral body. If it is exhausted, if it no longer finds the courage to transform new drives, in short, if it has no energy to work on itself, then the thread of life breaks off, and it must break off once it has used up the measure which is allotted to every human being. Then the time has come when the astral body must take its forces from the principle of human organization which lies nearest it, from the etheric body. And now the time comes when the astral body lives at the expense of the power stored up in the etheric body; the expression of this is evident in a person when their memory, their productive imagination, gradually dwindles. We have often heard here that the etheric body is the bearer of productive imagination and memory, of what is called the hope and courage to live. These feelings, when they become its permanent element, adhere to the etheric body. They are now sucked out by the astral body; and after the astral body has thus lived at the expense of the etheric body and has sucked out all that the latter had to give, the time begins when the creative powers of the physical body are consumed by the astral body. And when these are exhausted, the vitality of the physical body dwindles, the body hardens, the pulse slows down. Finally, the astral body also eats away at the physical

body and takes away its strength. And when it has consumed it, there is no longer any possibility that the physical body can be maintained out of the physical principle.

If the astral body is to become free and be born to the life and work of the ego, then it is necessary that in the second half of life the freed astral body, when the measure of work is exhausted, consumes its shells again just as they were formed. And in this manner an individual life is created out of the work of the ego.

Let the following serve as a parable: Think of a piece of wood that you set on fire. If it were not as it is, you would not be able to light it. The flame comes out of the wood, but at the same time it consumes it. That is the nature of the flame, that it is released from the wood and consumes its own mother ground. Thus the astral body is thrice born, thus, like the flame consumes the wood, it consumes its own foundation; and in this consists the possibility that individualized life can exist, because the astral body ultimately consumes its foundation. Death is to it the root of life, and there could be no conscious individual life at all if there were not death. We understand and comprehend death alone by seeking to recognize its origin, and therefore we comprehend life by recognizing its relation to death.

Similarly, we come to understand the nature of disease. And this will make us understand even more the nature of death. Every disease presents itself as a destroyer of life. What is an illness? In order to understand the essence of illness, we must consider the human being in the context of nature. Let us make clear what happens when the human being as a living being is confronted with the rest of nature. With every breath of air, with every sound, with the food, with the light they take in, the human being enters into an interaction with nature surrounding them. If you look at the matter carefully, you will come to the conclusion, even without occultism, that the things outside are the actual formers and openers of the physical organs. When certain animals migrate into dark caves, their eyes are regressed in time. Where there is no more light, there can no longer be light-sensitive eyes; conversely, only where there is light can light-sensitive eyes form. Therefore Goethe says, the eye is formed by the light for the light. Of course, the physical body is built up by what we have described as the actual inner architects. Humans are physical beings, and the outer things are that out of which, in harmony with the inner architects, the whole human being is built up. Then the relation of individual forces and substances to the human being will give quite a different picture. Those who have possessed the deep understanding of a true mystic will be able to tell us especially much here.

For Paracelsus,⁷ the whole outer world is a human organism laid apart like a fan, and the human being is like an extract of the whole outer world. When we see a plant, we can say in the sense of Paracelsus: There is a lawful connection in this plant, and there is something in the human being which corresponds to this plant in the healthy or sick organism. Therefore, Paracelsus, for example, calls a cholera patient an “arsenicus”, and arsenic is for him a remedy for cholera. Thus, there is a relationship between every organ of the human being and what is around us in nature. You have only to take an essence of nature and form it to be human-like, then you would have the human being. Throughout nature the individual letters are spread out. Put them together and you have the human being. There you get an idea of how the whole of the rest of nature affects the human being, and that the human being is called to compose their being out of the whole of the rest of nature. Everything that is in us has basically been drawn into us from outer nature, has been taken up into the process of life. If we understand this mystery of the vitalization of external forces and substances, then we will be able to comprehend the essence of a disease.

We come to a part where it becomes difficult for a modern educated person to understand how many concepts in medicine act like a kind of fog. How suggestive it seems today at a gathering when someone as a self-identified naturopath utters the word “poison.” What is a poison, and what is an unnatural effect in the human organism? Whatever you introduce into the human organism acts according to natural laws. It is incomprehensible to speak of something not acting according to natural laws in the body. And what is a poison? Water is a strong poison if you consume ten buckets of it at once; and what is poison today could be of the most beneficent effects if it is supplied to the body in the right way. It always depends in what quantity and under what circumstances one ingests a substance. There is no poison per se.

In Africa, there is a tribe that uses a certain kind of dog for hunting. Now, however, there is a kind of fly there that carries a certain poison that kills the dogs when they are stung by the flies.⁸ So the natives⁹ of the Zambezi River have found a remedy for this sting. They take the pregnant dogs to areas where there are many of these tsetse flies and let the pregnant dogs be bitten by the tsetse flies. The natives then know how to arrange it so that the pregnant dogs die only after they have given birth. But it so happens that the young dogs are now immune and can be used for hunting. There something happened which is so important for the understanding of life: A poison has been absorbed into a life process at the moment when a descending line changes into an ascending line, so that the poison becomes a substance belonging to the organism. What we have absorbed from external nature in this way makes us strong and thus protects us.

Spiritual science shows us that the whole human organism is built up in this way; we could even say, the whole human organism is built of nothing other than things that were originally poisons. As far as the foods that you enjoy today, you get the opportunity to eat them only after having made yourself immune to their harmfulness by a similar process of gradual exposure. And we are stronger the more such substances we have incorporated in this way. We make ourselves weak against external nature by rejecting its substances.

In the regions where medicine is still based on occultism, the doctor throws his whole personality into the fray. There are cures in which the doctor ingests snake venom, for example, and then his saliva becomes a remedy against such snakebites. He ingests the poison into his own organism, thereby making himself the bearer of the healing powers, becomes strong and thus makes others strong against the poison in question.¹⁰ The most harmless things for our organism have come into being in this way. The organism needs the incorporation of the outer worlds and of nature; but in the process there must also be the possibility that the thing swings like a pendulum to the other side. There is always the possibility, when human beings expose themselves to such substances—and they are exposed to them at every moment—that the agent will overpower in its effect and do harm, depending on whether the life body of the person in question is capable of absorbing it or not. The organism becomes strong against an agent if it is strong enough at a given moment to absorb the substance.

There is no way to escape disease if you want to have health. Every possibility to make yourself strong against external influences contains the possibility of having illness, of getting sick. Disease is the precondition for health. This is a very real developmental process. Precisely this is the consequence and the gift of illness: that the human being thereby acquires strength. What survives when the pendulum has swung, that is the fruit of immunity from the illness—and this remains even beyond death.

Those who go a little further will gain from this very fact a kind of understanding of the nature of illness and the nature of death. If we want strength and health, then we must accept its precondition, illness. If we want to be strong, then we must protect ourselves against weakness by taking the weakness in ourselves and transforming it into strength. If this is grasped vividly, it will make illness and death comprehensible to us. These concepts will be brought to humanity by the spiritual-scientific movement. Today, for many, this may still be something that speaks only to the mind. But when the intellect will have completely absorbed the matter, then it will cause a deep harmonious state of mind in people, then it will become the wisdom of life.

Have you not heard that anthroposophical truths, drawn from occultism, can even become dangerous? Do we not have numerous opponents who claim that anthroposophy is a poison and harms people? Yes, anthroposophists and the occultists themselves know that anthroposophy can also have a harmful effect; however, they also know that it must be absorbed and assimilated in order to make the human being strong, and that it is not only something about which you can endlessly talk about, but something which then proves itself in life as a spiritual remedy.

And spiritual science also knows that the physical is built up out of the spiritual. If spiritual forces act on the etheric body, then they also act as healthy in the context of the physical body. If our ideas of the world and of life are healthy, then these healthy thoughts are the most powerful remedies. Only on weak natures, which have become weak natures through materialism and naturalism, does what Anthroposophy proclaims as truth have a sickening effect. They must assimilate the concepts in order to make themselves strong. Only then has anthroposophy fulfilled its task—when it produces strong people in life.

Goethe has solved our question about life and death so beautifully: Everything in nature is life; she has invented death only in order to have an abundance of life. And so you could say: She has invented, beside death, illness in order to produce strong health. And she necessarily had to allow apparently harmful effects from wisdom, so that this wisdom can have a strengthening and healing effect on humanity.

It is precisely by this that the spiritual-scientific world movement differs from the other movements: You can argue about and discuss it if you demand of it that it should prove itself logically. Anthroposophy should not be something that can be substantiated merely on logical grounds, but something that makes people spiritually, and also physically, healthy. The more it shows its effects outside in life, by elevating life in such a way that life's pain is transformed into life's happiness, the more living proof there will be for it. People today may believe ever so strongly that they can find logical objections to it. But spiritual science is something which, like an apparent poison, is transformed into a remedy and then has a fertilizing effect in life. And it will not show itself in logic—it cannot simply be proved—it will prove itself in life.

Medical School and Theosophy

This lecture was held on the 25th of May 1905 in Berlin. Like the previous lecture, it was part of a series of public lectures to promote the Theosophical Society. It was reconstructed by the editors from a combination of partial stenograms and various listener's notes, and first published in a newsletter in 1957. It was subsequently included in the second, expanded edition of CW 53 in 1981, from which this translation was made.

Steiner:

Now there are great cyclical laws in all fields of endeavor, which refer to the shadow as well as to the light sides of culture. If so much is uncertain in medical science today, we must be clear that the root cause of this uncertainty is deeply, deeply rooted in our habits of thought. These habits of thought are rooted deeper than all the theories that are acquired within a science. And they cannot be simply changed, but only gradually replaced by others. The materialistic, mechanistic thinking of our time influences all these habits of thinking of people today. What contempt the physician of today has for the medical science of the Middle Ages and antiquity; and yet the aspiring physician could learn much from the history of medicine of those ancient times. They could learn many a different outlook from that which prevails in present-day medicine. The theories of Galen, two to three centuries after Christ, for example, and the medical scholasticism of the Middle Ages are known to very few physicians today. Unjustly, people today look down upon this ancient medical science. If today's physicians wanted to get to know it, they would be able to learn many valuable things. The Hippocratic teachings, which show the composition of the human being from the four elements of earth, water, air and fire, arouses sneers today. An example of what I mean may be if we look at a people who do not belong to our present cultural milieu, the Hindus. The Hindu doctors apply a principle that is the basis of immunization, of vaccination as we know it, with a healing serum. It is that of combating a certain form of disease by applying the pathogen itself as a remedy. Hindu doctors cure snakebites by treating the wound with their saliva. Through training, the saliva is prepared. The doctors have made themselves immune to snakebites, to snake venom, through snakebites on their own bodies. It is their view that the physician can also affect something in the physical body of someone else through something that they develop within themselves. All healing effects from person to person are based on this principle. For the Hindus, this principle is based on a certain initiation. They know that a person can become another person through a certain training. Powers, which another person does not have, are developed in them just as a piece of iron develops its power by being brushed with a magnet. The young doctor would have quite different feelings towards healing if they delved into the real history of medicine. Words from which they cannot find any meaning nowadays nevertheless contain a deep meaning, even if they sneeringly deny it.

It is lamentable that our whole science is interspersed with materialistic imponderables; thus it is hardly conceivable that someone can free themselves from them and learn to think independently. Our whole modern scientific foundation for anatomy and physiology is built upon this materialistic way of thinking. In the 16th century the first anatomy doctrine was taught by Vesalius. Harvey taught of the of blood circulation in the materialistic sense. According to these systems the whole 17th and 18th century was educated. People had to think materialistically for several centuries in order to make all the great discoveries and inventions that we owe to these times. This way of thinking has taught us to produce certain substances in a laboratory - we owe the epoch-making discoveries of Justus von Liebig¹¹ to it - but it has also led us to regard the human physical body as the only thing. Life, what we call life, is difficult to reconcile with the concept which a materialistic physician has of it. Only someone who knows by intuition what life is can really advance to the comprehension of life. And such a person also knows that the effectiveness of chemical and physical laws in the human body is under the rule of something for which we ourselves lack the word, which can be recognized only by intuition. Only when the physician themselves has become a different person can they realize this. Through a certain training he must first acquire the concepts and then the insight into the workings of what we call our etheric body. The ordinary mind, the ordinary human intellect, is incapable of comprehending the spiritual; as soon as it has to move up into higher realms, it fails. Therefore, in the medical field, without intuition, everything is only talk; one does not touch reality. Higher, finer forces are necessary, which must be developed by the physician. Only then a thorough healing of certain kinds of illness is possible.

The Evolving Goethe In the Light of Benedetto Croce

This essay was published in the August 12th, 1923 issue of the periodical *Das Goetheanum*. Steiner had established *Das Goetheanum* two years earlier as a weekly news magazine with a focus on current events and cultural commentary from a spiritual perspective. All of Steiner's essays for *Das Goetheanum* are published in volume 36 of the Collected Works, and the excerpt below is translated from the first German edition of 1961.

In his early 20s Johann Wolfgang von Goethe wrote a book titled *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, published in 1794. The titular character Werther pines for an unrequited love and eventually commits suicide. The story was wildly popular from its initial publication, with many fans determined to live the Werther aesthetic, even up to copycat suicides. Biographers have debated ever since to what degree the book was supposed to be autobiographical. Below is an excerpt from a review Steiner wrote of one such reckoning, from a book simply titled *Goethe* by Benedetto Croce, an Italian philosopher, cultural critic, and liberal. The book was published in German in 1920, and in English in 1923. The noteworthy part is the reference to an “immunization fever,” indicating that the literary culture of the time recognized the difference between a brief fever brought on by a vaccine and a regular case of the illness to the point that it could be employed effortlessly as a simile in a biographical essay.

Steiner:

Those who are familiar with Benedetto Croce’s “Aesthetics as the Science of Expression” must be extremely curious to also read the Goethe book by this outstanding personality, published in 1918 and available since 1920 in the extraordinarily sympathetic German edition by Julius Schlosser.

...

As seen by Croce, Goethe succeeds in orienting “Werther” in a brilliant way to art and life. The life that Werther lives is far removed from the life of Goethe, who writes Werther. Werther is ill; Goethe feels how this Werther illness can take root in life. For him, the question arises of how to feel and portray it in its truth. In undertaking this, Goethe does so as a healthy person. Croce, referring to Goethe’s own state of soul, calls Werther “rather a vaccination fever than real illness.” Decisively, Goethe’s own state of soul is drawn out of all that rushes Werther into catastrophe. Croce writes:

“This explains the childishness that makes us smile, even embarrasses us, as it were, when we read the report and testimonies that have as their subject the relationship of the young Goethe to Lotte Buff and her bridegroom and husband, the valiant, patient Kestner. These are all things about which the biographers and anecdote hunters have truly allowed themselves to be overly gossipy, as usual misunderstanding the spiritual meaning and giving in to the evil tendency to drown the work of art in biographical material, with exaggeration and inversion of the justified moral part that Goethe’s person awakens...”

The creation of Werther appears to Croce integrated into Goethe's life as an artistic-moral purification. Goethe wanted to experience the Werther fever artistically in himself in order to cure himself thoroughly from attacks by the same.

“Werther—the *unhappy Werther*—was ... by no means an ideal for the poet as he was for his contemporaries. In Werther, Goethe glorifies neither the right to passion, nor nature at the expense of society, nor suicide, nor whatever else people care to see in the story. That is, he does not represent these as states of soul that prevailed in him at that moment. He presents, on the contrary, as the title indicates, the *sufferings* and finally the death of young Werther; and precisely because he regards his fate as suffering, futile suffering, his development as being of such a nature that it leads not to the joyful elation of feeling superior and exalted above others, but to self-destruction, that is why the book has become a liberating and purifying act.”

Croce does not accept that Werther is, as so many think, a “sublime legend of love”; on the contrary, to him it is “a book of illness”; Werther's kind of love “is a sign or an immediate expression of the illness itself.”

Lectures to the Members

Smallpox, Karma, and Vaccination

The following excerpts are taken from a series of eleven lectures held in Hamburg in May of 1910 to an invitation-only audience who had been studying theosophy and Steiner's works for years. It was first published in 1911 based on participant notes, which have since been lost. Since the oldest extant source is the 1911 first printing, it is difficult to say how accurate it is. It is in volume 120 of the Collected Works. This translation is based on the slightly revised 1975 edition.

The lectures in this volume are a comprehensive treatment of the topic of karma—how it works, what the effects look like, and many of the ramifications. Of particular interest related to the topic of vaccination is Steiner's discussion of the ethical implications of intervening in infectious diseases, whether on a large scale through public health measures including vaccination, or in individual cases. His response to the question shows that Steiner's view of karma is quite flexible, flowing both backwards and forwards in time, and not at all deterministic. It is also view of karma that allows for a multitude of possible paths into the future, a necessity if his view is to incorporate both human freedom and the laws of karma.

In the paragraphs leading up to this excerpt Steiner had explained the cosmic wisdom behind volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, and epidemics. The present Earth is the product of both normal and abnormal cosmic forces, and human freedom is only possible because of the interplay of both. Excerpted below is his example.

Steiner:

We must be aware that where the Luciferic and Ahrimanic¹² principles work together, whether simultaneously or over long periods of time, or where they work against each other, certain complications arise in human life. And these complications work in such a way that we encounter them in the most diverse ways in the most diverse cases, so that no two cases will be alike. But when we study human life we will find our way through the question in the following manner: If we look for the interaction of Lucifer and Ahriman in the individual case, we will always find a thread that will make this relationship clear. But we must make a clear distinction between the inner and the outer human being. We already had to make a clear distinction between that which expresses itself in the Intellectual Soul¹³ and that which shows itself as the effect of the Intellectual Soul on the etheric body. We have to look at the progress in which karma takes place, and at the same time we have to be aware that we have the possibility to influence the inner being through karmic influences in such a way that through a person's inner being a karmic balance is prepared for the future. Thus it is possible that this can now happen:

A person can have gone through sensations, feelings and so on, especially in a previous life, which drove him to unkindness towards their neighbor. Let us think, for example, that they have gone through something where they have absorbed unkindness in themselves through karmic action. It may well be that they, as if continuing on a descending line, create evil, that is, that they first walk on a descending path so that the opposite tendency is developed, and then ascend again. Let us suppose, then, that a person has become inclined to a certain lack of love by surrendering to certain influences; then in a later life the lack of love enters as a karmic effect and forms inner forces in their organization. Now we can do two things, consciously or unconsciously—because our culture is not yet ready to do it consciously. We are able to take measures with such a person to ensure that those qualities in their organization which come from this unkindness are removed. We can do something that has a counter-acting effect to that which manifests in the outer organization from this previous lack of love. But with such measures not all lack of love in the soul will be abolished, only in the outer body will the manifestation of that lack of love be removed. Because when we do nothing more, we have only done half the work, or perhaps none at all. We might have helped the person physically, outwardly; but spiritually we did not help them. By taking away the instrument of unkindness from them in the outer physical body, they cannot now live out their unkindness; they must keep it in their inner organization for a next incarnation.

Let us suppose that a great number of people, because of unkindness towards others in a previous life, would have been drawn to absorb certain infectious substances in order to fall prey to an epidemic. Let us further assume that we could do something against the epidemic. In such a case we would then prevent the outer physical body from expressing the unkindness, but we would not yet have removed the inner tendency to unkindness. Let us think of the case in such a way that when we remove the physical manifestation of unkindness we take on the obligation to have an effect on the soul in such a way that we also remove the inclination to unkindness from the soul. With a smallpox vaccination we remove the physical manifestation of unkindness in the external physical organism—by changing the physical body. Now consider the following example, which has been researched by spiritual science: In one cultural period, a seed was planted when there was a general tendency to develop a higher degree of selfishness, unkindness. That's when the seed was planted that flowers into a weakness in the external organization of the next life; that's the way it is. In Theosophy, one is obliged to tell the truth.

Now we understand that in our era the protections of vaccination have appeared. But we can also understand something else, namely that there is something like a reluctance to be vaccinated in the best minds of our time. This represents a correspondence of the outer with the inner. And we can now say: If we remove the physical manifestation, on the one hand, we also have the obligation, as a counterpart to that act, to change the materialistic character of this person through an appropriately spiritual education. That would have to be the necessary corresponding measure. Otherwise we would only do half the work. Yes, if we only treat the physical weakness we are simply doing half the work and the person will, in some way, have to create the counter measure themselves in a later incarnation. For if they have the inclination to smallpox in them then it is only because they have created that quality in themselves, of which the inclination to the disease is the result. When only receptivity to the disease has been negated, then only the outer side of the karmic consequence has been affected. If, on the one hand, one is introducing public health measures, then on the other hand one must feel the obligation to give something for the soul of the people whose physical organism one has transformed. Vaccination will not harm a person who, after vaccination, receives a spiritual education in later life. But we will unbalance things too much if we only aim at one side and do not attach importance to the other. This is basically what you perceive in those circles where it is said that when public hygiene goes too far only weak natures are propagated. This view is unjustified; but you see, the essential thing is that one must not take on one task without the other.

This brings us to an important law in the evolution of humanity that works in such a way that an outer and an inner balance must always be maintained, and that one must not only look at the one, but must also consider the other. We are looking at the big picture here and have not even come to the point of dealing with the question: How do hygiene and karma relate to each other? You will see that answering this question will lead us even deeper into karma. And we will see how karmic connections exist between the birth and death of a person, how other personalities play a role in a person's life, and how the free will of a person and karma are in harmony.

Continuing the theme on the next day, May 26th, 1910:

It will only be possible, as I have repeatedly pointed out, to indicate the great karmic laws in simple outline, in order to provide some insight into this almost immeasurably large field. If you consider everything we have discussed in the last few days, you will no longer find it remarkable that a person is driven, from a certain level of consciousness, to seek the balancing effects in the outside world for such karmic causes as they have incorporated into themselves. They can be drawn to a place where they can, for example, get an infection in order to experience the balancing effects for an embodied karmic cause. And even in what might be called simple accidents, a person can be drawn to seek a balance with the onset of such misfortune.

Now what happens to the karmic course of events if by some means we are able to prevent a person from seeking this balance?

Let us suppose that by means of certain public health measures we effectively remove certain causes from being there at all, certain things for which, by virtue of their karmic connections, a person may have had an inclination. Let us imagine that by means of public health measures it would be possible to fight certain pathogens in a certain area. Now we have already considered that humanity cannot simply decide to take such measures. We have seen how in certain eras, for example, the inclination to cleanliness laws arises;¹⁴ the inclination today is simply the reappearance of something which had disappeared in the meantime and now reappears in a reverse repetition.¹⁵ From this we have seen that it is the working of the great laws of the karma of humanity that at a certain point in time people come to take this or that action.

But we will also easily understand that in an earlier era humanity did not come to take such measures because in an earlier period mankind needed the epidemics that are now to be eliminated by public health measures. With regard to the grand organization of life, the development of humanity as a whole is really subject to very specific laws. There is no possibility of taking such measures before they can be of significance and benefit to the development of all humanity. For such measures do not come from the fully conscious, rational, sensible life which a person can acquire between birth and death, but they come rather from the collective spirit of humanity. And you only have to consider how this or that invention or discovery only then appears once mankind is really mature for it.

A brief overview of the history of the development of humanity on earth can make this clear. Just remember that our ancestors—that is to say, our own souls—lived in bodies of a quite different shape than today's human bodies on the ancient continent of Atlantis. Then this continent sank down, and the organization we know today was only formed in the area of our present continents. It was then, in a very specific age, that the inhabitants of one half of the earth that was submerged were first brought into contact with the inhabitants of the other half. Only recently, in a not-so-distant past, have the peoples of Europe been able to reestablish contact with the territories which have been separated on the other side of the Atlantic continent. There really are great laws involved in such matters. And whether this or that thing is discovered, or whether measures are taken which make it possible to intervene karmically in this or that direction, does not depend on the opinion or the arbitrary wishes of random people. It occurs when it is meant to occur. But regardless, if we remove certain causes which would otherwise have been there and which people would have sought out due to their karmic entanglement, we are intervening in karma. This intervention does not mean that we eliminate the karmic need for balance, only that we have steered it in another direction.

So let's think of the case where a number of people would feel compelled by karmic entanglement to seek out certain influences which would bring a karmic equalization. Through hygiene and public health measures these influences or conditions have now been removed for the time being; people can no longer seek them. But this does not mean that these people have been freed from that within them which sought those conditions as karmic effects. Rather they are impelled to seek out other experiences that can bring these effects. We cannot escape our karma. Such measures do not exonerate us from what we would otherwise have sought. You can see from this that for a karmic balance to be achieved, when we are in a position to remove to one side, there would have to be a balance to another direction. We only create the necessity to seek other opportunities and influences when we clear away one particular influence. Now let us suppose that many epidemics, common causes of illness, are simply due to the fact that the people who seek out these causes of illness want to clear away what they have karmically acquired, as for example with the smallpox epidemic organs of unkindness. If we were able to remove these organs, the cause of unkindness would still remain, and the souls concerned would then have to seek the appropriate compensation in another way in this or another incarnation. We can understand what is going on when we point out something we must certainly count on, and that is what follows.

Today a great deal of external influences and causes are being cleared away that would otherwise have been sought out to balance certain karmic things that humanity has been burdened with from earlier ages. But by doing so we only remove the possibility that a person succumbs to these external influences. We only make their outer life more pleasant or also healthier. But by doing this we only achieve this: that what the person would have sought as karmic balance in relation to the corresponding disease must now be sought in another way. The souls which are saved in a health-related way today are thus condemned to seek this karmic balance in another way.

And you will be able to see it in countless instances that are just like what I have described. By giving people greater physical comfort through a healthier life, by making the physical life easier for them, the soul is influenced in the opposite direction; it is influenced in such a way that it will gradually feel a certain emptiness, a dissatisfaction, an unfulfilled feeling. And if it were to continue in such a way that the outer life would become more and more pleasant, more and more healthy—as people would prefer according to the general ideas in purely materialistic life—then such souls would have less and less incentive to progress in themselves. A parallel desolation of souls would arise.

Anyone who takes a closer look at life can already notice this today. In hardly any other age have there been so many people who live in such pleasant external conditions, but who are accompanied by dull, unoccupied souls, as is the case today. These people therefore rush from sensation to sensation; then, when the money is sufficient, they travel from town to town to see something, or if they have to stay in the same town, they rush from pleasure to pleasure every evening. The soul, however, remains bored, and in the end no longer knows what it should seek out in the world to achieve meaning. In particular, living in purely external, physically pleasant conditions creates a tendency to think only about the physical. And if this inclination to think only about the physical had not already existed for a long time, the inclination to theoretical materialism would not have become as strong as it is in our time. So souls endure more suffering while outer life is made healthier. . . .

Thus we see how what comes out of the materialistic worldview makes easier the outer life, but creates difficulties for the inner life, which lead to searching for the content of a spiritual world-view out of the sufferings of the soul. The spiritual world-view, the Theosophical world-view as it is known today, meets the souls who cannot find satisfaction in the desolation of the impressions of an otherwise quite pleasantly arranged outer life.

Eliminating Spirituality by Injection I

It was 1917 and the world had been at war for three years, at tremendous cost. Everywhere people pondered what had led to the war, and how to move forward. Steiner was stuck in neutral Switzerland where he and an international group of supporters were building his conference center, the Goetheanum.

The following lecture is from a series of weekend lectures to members of the Anthroposophical Society who were able to attend in person in Dornach. These paragraphs come from the lecture of October 7th, 1917, contained in volume 177 of the Collected Works, and is translated from the 5th revised edition of 1999. The source of the text is the stenographic transcription made by Helen Finckh, a professional and regular transcriber of Steiner's lectures in these years.

The series is titled *The Fall of the Spirits of Darkness*, and Steiner's main thesis is that certain spiritual forces, which he calls Ahrimanic, were driven out of the spiritual realm in the late 19th century and are working more actively among humanity on Earth, usually in an unconscious way, to reinforce materialism and stifle any breakthrough to a more spiritual culture.

Steiner:

There will be circumstances in the future where you will not really know who you are dealing with. ... The institutions, the concepts, the social ideas that people make for themselves today are abstract, crude, and clumsy in the face of what approaches humanity from the future in the form of complicated social relationships. And because people are not able to encompass what exists in reality with these clumsy concepts, with their ideas, humanity will fall more and more into chaos, as it is already sufficiently indicated by the events of this war. This chaos comes from the fact that reality is a different one, a richer one, than what people can imagine, what people work out in their heads.

And you will have to realize that we are confronted with the choice: Either, because we do not know how to order the world, we continue pounding away at each other, as with the present shooting war, or we begin with the formation of such concepts, such ideas, as are up to the task of encompassing these complicated conditions. There must come a spiritual current in mankind, which aims at forming concepts that are up to the real conditions. Those who want to cling to what remains from the old times will be numerous (today they are still in the minority) and they will form concepts and ideas and deeds out of superficial observation, because in fact their bodies are filled with Ahrimanic spirituality, which aims at forming concepts and ideas and deeds out of superficial observation. Just do not fool yourself. We stand before a very specific movement. Just as the spirit was abolished at that Council in Constantinople¹⁶, that is, as it was determined as a matter of dogma: the human being consists only of body and soul; to speak of a spirit is heretical, so people will strive in another manner to abolish the soul, the life of the soul. And the time will come, perhaps not at all in the distant future, when at such a congress as the one that took place in 1912,¹⁷ quite other things will develop, where quite other tendencies will appear, where people will say: It is downright pathological for a person to even think of spirit and soul. Only such people are healthy as speak only of the existence of the physical body. It will be regarded as a symptom of illness when a person develops in such a way that they can come to the concept: There exists such a thing as a spirit or a soul. Such people will be considered to have a pathological condition. And they will find—of this you can be quite sure—a corresponding drug¹⁸ through which such a person can be cured.

Back in 869 they abolished the spirit by dogma. The soul will be abolished through medication.¹⁹ Based on such a “healthy view,” people will invent a vaccine²⁰ by means of which the organism is so affected—to be administered as early in youth as possible, potentially immediately at birth—that the human body becomes incapable of the thought: There exists a soul and a spirit. This is how decisively the two world-view streams will confront each other. The one will have to think about how concepts and ideas are to be formed, so that they can cope with actual reality, the reality of the spirit and the soul. The others, the successors of today’s materialists, will look for a vaccine²¹ that will make the body “healthy”, that is, make it so that this body, by its constitution, will no longer talk of such silly things as soul and spirit, but will talk in a “healthy” way only of the forces that live in machines and chemistry, the forces that form planets and stars out of cosmic nebulae. This will be brought about by a physical procedure. The materialistic physicians will be given the task of expelling the souls from mankind. Yes, those who believe that you can see into the future with playful concepts are very wrong. You must look into the future with serious, thorough, deep concepts. Spiritual science is not a game, it is not just a theory, but spiritual science has a real duty towards the development of mankind.

Eliminating Spirituality by Injection II

Three weeks later Steiner returned to the theme in front of the same audience. This excerpt is from October 27th, 1917, and is also contained in volume 177 of the Collected Works.

Steiner:

But the spirits of darkness are among us; they are there. We must keep watch, so that we notice where they meet us, so that we gain an understanding of where they are. Because the most dangerous thing in the near future will be to surrender unconsciously to the influences that are, after all, really there. For whether humanity recognizes them or not makes no difference to their reality.

Above all, however, the point will be for these spirits of darkness to bring into confusion that which is now spreading on earth, that which the spirits of light wish to continue as their work in the right direction, and to lead this into a wrong direction. I have already pointed out one such wrong direction, and one of the most paradoxical. I have pointed out to you that; indeed, human bodies will begin developing in such a way that a certain spirituality can find a place in them. But the materialistic sensibility that will spread more and more through the influence of the spirits of darkness will work against it and fight against it with material means. I have told you that the spirits of darkness will inspire their hosts, the people in whom they will dwell, even so far as to look for an inoculant²² to drive out the inclination to spirituality, starting from the earliest youth, from such souls, by the indirect route of the physical body. Just as today we inoculate²³ people against this or that illness, so in the future children will be inoculated²⁴ with a substance—which is entirely possible to produce—so that by means of this inoculation²⁵ people will be immune to developing the “follies” of a spiritual life within themselves, follies of course spoken here in the materialistic sense.

The matter has already begun—more in the literary field, where it is, however, less harmful. I have pointed out to you that writings of very learned physicians have appeared regarding the supposed pathology of various geniuses. You know: Conrad Ferdinand Meyer, Viktor Scheffel, Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, Goethe—materialistic authors have tried to understand the genius of each of these by establishing this or that pathological condition present in them.²⁶ And what is most exciting in this field is that people have actually tried to understand Christ Jesus from the pathological point of view; understand the Gospels from the pathological point of view. There are already two volumes today which trace the origin of Christianity back to the fact that once in the beginning of the modern era a mentally and spiritually abnormal man lived who went around Palestine as Jesus and infected people with Christianity because of his psychological illness, his psychotic symptoms. Two entire books about the pathology of Christ Jesus.

These, as I said, are the innocent, literary beginnings. But all this tends in a direction where finally it comes to this: the need to find the means by which to inoculate²⁷ people's physical bodies so that they no longer give rise to any inclinations towards spiritual ideas, but throughout their lives believe only in sense-perceptible matter. In the same way that you vaccinate²⁸ against tuberculosis today from the excited impulses present in medicine, so you will inoculate²⁹ against the disposition to spirituality.

Eliminating Spirituality by Injection III

Continuing on the same theme, Steiner brings up the topic again nine days later in a lecture held in Zurich, a couple hours by train from Dornach. After this he never mentions the subject again. This excerpt is contained in volume 178 of the collected works. Held on November 6th, 1917, it was stenographically recorded by Helene Finckh. This translation is from the 5th edition of 1992.

Steiner:

And such things were going on behind the scenes of the outer events of our decades. The intention was to put into the hands of a certain group of people, first of all, the secret: how to control the masses, which I have indicated earlier. This is the secret, how specifically such masses as care little about external affairs, but who have a spiritual disposition, who would otherwise be suitable to serve as a preparation for the sixth post-Atlantean period,³⁰ how this mass of people is to be mastered to an extensive degree, and how the gift to control them is to be brought into the hands of a few individual people.

The other is something that will play a great role in the future: to get hold of secrets, to get hold of the means to direct conditions that are connected with disease processes, and also those connected to the reproductive process, in a certain direction. Such things as I have already mentioned to some friends. The materialistic age strives towards this from certain circles: to paralyze all spiritual development of mankind; to make it impossible. To make people—simply by their temperaments, by their character—reject everything spiritual, to regard it as foolishness.

Such a current - it is already noticeable among individual people today - will deepen more and more. The longing will arise, so that the public opinion will become: The spiritual, the spiritual is foolishness, is madness!³¹ – By this means they will try to achieve the following: To create a vaccine to inoculate against spirituality. Just as science has come up with vaccines to protect against diseases, they will now develop specific inoculants that will influence the human body in such a way that it does not give a home to the spiritual inclinations of the soul. People will be inoculated against the disposition for spiritual ideas. At least this is what one will try to do: they will research inoculants that will cause people to lose the urge for a spiritual life already in childhood.

Injectations for Accelerated Learning

In a comment almost four years after statements about an anti-spirituality injection, Steiner returns to the theme of the misuse of injectable substances. The lecture was held in Dornach on July 3rd, 1921 and recorded by Helene Finckh. It is contained in volume 205 of the Collected Works. The translation is from the 2nd edition of 1987.

Steiner:

I would also like to take this opportunity to mention that until 869 AD, until the eighth general ecumenical council in Constantinople, the human being was divided into body, soul and spirit. Now, as I have often mentioned, at this eighth general ecumenical council the formula was established for the Occident: It must not be believed that the human being consists of body and soul and spirit, but only of body and soul, and that the soul has some spiritual qualities. This then became generally accepted. In the Middle Ages, it was heretical to believe that the human being consisted of body, soul, and spirit. Today the professors of philosophy find through unbiased science: Man consists only of body and soul. This “unbiased science” is nothing other than a decision of the eighth general ecumenical council in the ninth century. But this needs changing. It can be said that through this eighth ecumenical council, mankind has lost a consciousness of the spirit, which must be regained. But if we continue on the path I have just described to you, humanity will also lose the consciousness of the soul. Among the materialists of the 19th century this consciousness of the soul had already disappeared to the extent that one said: The brain secretes thoughts like the liver secretes bile. So you actually only have consciousness as a byproduct of bodily processes. And indeed, today, without people knowing it, there are already tendencies in certain obscured quarters, where all kinds of societies are working towards such things, to bring about something similar to what happened at the Council of Constantinople in 869, namely to declare: The human being does not consist of body and soul. Rather, the human being consists only of the body, and the soul is merely something that develops out of the body.

It is therefore impossible to educate a person spiritually; one must thus find a means, a material means, with which to inject³² people at a certain age, and then they will develop their talents by injection.³³ - This tendency definitely exists. It is directly the goal of Ahrimanic development: no longer to establish schools in order to teach, but for the purpose of injecting³⁴ students with certain substances. Indeed, it is entirely possible. It is not the case that you cannot actually do it. You can do it, but you turn the human being into an automaton. You would enormously accelerate what can otherwise be achieved by the way of brainwashing, through an education that works towards thought coercion. There are already substances that can be obtained, by which a person, for example, if they were injected³⁵ at the age of seven, could easily skip elementary school; they would become a thought automaton. They would become extraordinarily clever, but they would have no consciousness of it. Such a cleverness would unfold in this way. But what do many people care today whether a person has an inner life or not, if the person simply walks around outwardly and does this or that! Those people who today prefer to surrender to the Ahrimanic culture—and there are those too—certainly strive towards such ideals. After all, what could be more appealing to a mindset, as is becoming more and more widespread today, than to find a drug³⁶ instead of spending years plagued by children! You have to express these things dramatically. If they are not expressed dramatically, the humanity of the present will not become cognizant of the goals towards which it strives. Such a substance³⁷ would simply achieve the loosening of the etheric body in the physical body. As soon as the etheric body is loosened, the play between the universe and the etheric body is an extraordinarily lively one and a person would become an automaton. The physical body of the human being must be educated here on earth by spiritual will. In full consciousness of the trend towards the automation of the human being, we have developed the methods of the Waldorf school. In this respect, Waldorf methods should function as a cultural motor, leading to a spiritualization of culture. Because it is fundamentally necessary today—we can already say this—that among people today the spiritual life is specifically cultivated as a spiritual life. Therefore, one should also look valiantly at everything that emerges as a symptom of the improvement of individual people. On many occasions I

have emphasized how mankind today strives to substitute routine for the real practice of life, routine being the mechanization of ordinary life.

Medical Lectures

Anthroposophy and Vaccination

In 1921 Steiner held a number of individual lectures at universities on the topic of Anthroposophy and Science. In addition, there were discussion evenings afterwards. As usual, Helene Finckh came along to record everything Steiner said. She recorded this answer at a discussion evening in Zurich, June 4th, 1923. In this case, the stenogram and its reconstruction sat in the archive until it was finally published in volume 75 of the Collected Works in 2010. This translation is from that first edition of 2010.

Steiner:

Question: How does anthroposophy judge vaccination as a means of protection against epidemics?

Rudolf Steiner: In terms of content, this question fits somewhat poorly with what was said earlier. But I will try to say something. For it is like this: Of course, as has already been said today, you must by no means believe that anthroposophy is polemicizing against the justified successes that have been achieved in the newer fields of natural science and medicine. In some cases it can be shown that such a success as is to be achieved by vaccination—for example, by the inoculation of smallpox—has actually been achieved. The fact remains that infectious diseases have been largely limited by the more external, more hygienic measures that have become necessary, as well as by vaccination. However, many vaccines are not such that you could say that they would have had a similar success for other diseases. But you have to concede the effectiveness of this principle.

On the other hand, this question is something that can be considered more psychologically. There are very many opponents of vaccination today. These opponents of vaccination are actually people whose psychology cannot be approached in a rational way. They are people who are motivated by an inner resistance to the way that vaccines try to work. And they cannot say from their knowledge that the vaccination methods do not work, because there are indeed effects. And those who resist, resist out of a certain unconscious bias against this method of vaccination.

Anthroposophy must start from deeper points of view. If you think of the illnesses together with what has been explained to you here today, especially about the repeated earth lives, if you are convinced that there are repeated earth lives, then you must also bring together what the human being experiences in the present life in the case of illnesses with what they have experienced in a previous earth life. If you will only realize this, if you have the will to realize this, completely irrespective of what is said, for example, in epidemiology, in infection science, completely irrespective of this, you must know that there is a certain connection between what a person has gone through in a previous life on Earth and what happens when they are now exposed to specific infectious agents. It is said that something happens by chance. But it is not admitted that out of the subconscious a person is driven to where they then come into contact with others in a place with a history of infection. Regardless of what they ultimately end up experiencing by this encounter, you can come to many other views of what is connected with a disease.

When you recognize that certain illnesses have something to do with the soul characteristics of the human being, that they are in a certain respect an overcoming of what a person was not able to achieve in a previous life on earth, and that these physical processes of illness, which you have to endure, are a balancing out—the process of an illness is also connected with soul phenomena—then you can also understand why, out of a certain unconscious, instinctive feeling, some people have an aversion to this healing elixir, the vaccine. They actually unconsciously say to themselves that in the case of what is present as a disease, an inner development of the soul up to the spirit would have to go parallel with the outer healing. And if in applying the vaccination it were possible that things succeed completely the way that people imagine it could, you would have to say nevertheless: Even if you manage by appropriate procedures to extinguish all epidemics, to control all diseases, you nevertheless ask yourself whether something else is not also necessary. You could feel that something must accompany this process, that at the same time an inner mental development towards the spiritual must take place. People would have to realize that such a process is possible. One can acknowledge everything that science says, but one must be clear about the necessity that, in contrast to what is available as an external healing process, there must still be something that brings the soul forward in an inner way and that connects to earlier spiritual connections, to earlier lives. Anthroposophy will never object to what natural science brings.

A Foot- and Mouth-Disease Vaccine

This next topic is only obliquely mentioned in the Collected Works. It shows up in the footnote to a letter Steiner wrote to his one of his collaborators in 1920, in a biographical footnote about a different collaborator in a separate volume, and in a few paragraphs from Steiner himself speaking to the assembled craftsmen who were building his large conference center. From this material it is not clear whether we are dealing with a vaccine or a remedy, or something else entirely. Given how highly infectious foot and mouth disease is among cows, it is not implausible that Steiner did wish to inoculate the cattle so that they would not come down with it.

Foot- and Mouth-Disease is a viral illness that affects cattle and other animals. Humans are not susceptible. It is an entirely separate illness from Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease that can affect humans. The FMD virus causes illness in cows, pigs, sheep, goats, deer, and other animals with divided hooves. Horses are not affected. There are seven major types, and around sixty sub-types of the virus. Immunity does not carry over from one type to the other. The virus severely weakens adults, and usually kills infants of the species it affects. Sick dairy cows produce little to no milk. The virus is fairly persistent in dense livestock conditions, and is shed in all bovine fluids. This makes spread rapid and control very difficult in modern agriculture.

In response to the changing economic conditions in Germany after its defeat in the First World War, many prominent followers of Steiner pooled their small businesses into a holding company called Der Kommende Tag, AG. The idea was to create a model of associative economics in support of a free spiritual life, underwriting Steiner's anthroposophy financially with the profits of this business while treating workers, suppliers, and customers fairly. This is how Steiner came to be advising dairy farmers.

The letter quoted below was sent to Edith Maryon, who was a close collaborator of Steiner's from 1914 until her death in 1924. Steiner was building an enormous conference center and hall decorated with carved wooden columns and capitals, which he called the Goetheanum, and her experience and training as a sculptor was very helpful. In addition to supervising the work on the hall, together they were collaborating on a 24-foot tall wooden sculpture titled "The Representative of Man" in a studio in Dornach. While the Goetheanum with all its sculptural work burned at the end of 1923, the sculpture can still be seen today in the replacement building, the Second Goetheanum.

Letter #46

Rudolf Steiner to Edith Maryon

Stuttgart, July 26, 1920

My dear Edith Maryon!

Immediately afterwards we will have a longer meeting of the Board of Directors; therefore I only want to send a few lines before I go out tomorrow to Dischingen to our well-known experiments. So far, everything that is not official business has gone well. The latter, however, brings more and more worries. Business acumen, which we need so much now, is unfortunately very scarce today. The few people we have are overworked. Others are not to be found at all. The Göttingen lecture cannot take place at all because the resistance there is too great.³⁸ I will arrange the concert for the people around Baron Rosenkrantz only when I come back. There will be plenty of time then, and I would appreciate it if nothing was said about it beforehand. I will be happy to be back in our Dornach studio and to work. I will return at the appointed time.

For today most cordial greetings

The Editors of the German edition note:

Before I go out tomorrow to Dischingen to our well-known experiments: In Dischingen, east of Stuttgart, between Heidenheim and Nördlingen, was the Guldesmühle, a business attached to the Der Kommende Tag association: a farm estate, grain and oil mill, as well as sawmill, where experiments were made to fight the foot and mouth disease rampant in Württemberg by inoculations with a remedy indicated by Rudolf Steiner.

Another volume mentions:

Dr Joseph Werr, Veterinarian (1885-1954)

As a veterinarian in Dischingen in Württemberg he got to know Rudolf Steiner in 1920. At that time, foot-and-mouth disease was rampant in Württemberg. Since the estates of Der Kommenden Tag AG were also affected, Rudolf Steiner was approached for advice. He gave a procedure with which Dr. Kolisko and Dr. Werr carried out extensive experiments on foot-and-mouth disease control, which Dr. Werr continued in South America in 1924. After his return, he worked in connection with the “Versuchsring anthroposophischer Landwirte” (Experimental Council of Anthroposophic Farmers) and the Weleda Company on the expansion of veterinary medicine according to spiritual scientific knowledge. About this remedy consult Joseph Werr’s book *Tierzucht und Tiermedizin im Rahmen biologisch-dynamischer Landwirtschaft (Animal breeding and veterinary medicine within the framework of biodynamic agriculture)*, Stuttgart 1953.

In a lecture to the construction workers building the conference center, Steiner said the following about these efforts. The statements were made on December 5th, 1923 and recorded by stenographer Helene Finckh. They are contained in volume 351 of the Collected Works. This translation is from the 4th edition of 1988.

Steiner:

We have carried out trials with a medicine³⁹ against foot-and-mouth disease in cattle, and we have done many such trials in recent years. These trials were carried out on large farms, but also on small farms where the cows did not produce as much milk as on the large farms. Of course, it was possible to learn a lot, because it was necessary to find out how the medicine works in the case of foot-and-mouth disease. Then it was not completed because officially people did not want to undertake the full process; nowadays all kinds of concessions are required and so on. But the medicine proved itself extraordinarily effective. And somewhat modified, it is also used in similar remedies in a very favorable way, as in the so-called “Staupe-Heil”, a remedy for canine distemper.⁴⁰ If you do these experiments, you will find the following. You will see that calves that come from cows that are overly conditioned to give too much milk are much weaker. You can see this in the effect of the remedy. In this regard the effect or non-effect is enormously increased. The calf grows up, when it does not perish from the foot-and-mouth disease. But a calf that comes from a cow that you overfeed and thus push for too much milk, such a calf is already weaker than calves that come from cows that are less trained for milk. You can see it in the first, second, third, and fourth generation. There it is so small that it is almost not noticed. This style of dairy farming has only existed for a short time, but I know very well that if you continue like this, if a cow is supposed to give more than thirty liters [about 8 gallons] of milk a day, if you maltreat her like this, then the entire cow industry will absolutely perish after a while. Nothing can be done about it.

Hayfever – to Doctors

This excerpt comes from a pair of lectures given at The Haag on November 15th and 16th, 1923, stenographically recorded by Walter Vegelahn. They were first published in a periodical in 1931, and then as part of the Collected Works in volume 319 in 1971. This translation is from the 1994 3rd edition. In this November 15th lecture Steiner talks about hay fever and the “water being” in human physiology as an aspect of the three fundamental systems in physiology: the Nerve-Sense system, the Metabolic-lymbic system, and the circulatory system. The interaction, and in particular the imbalances in these systems underlie illnesses both major and minor.

Steiner:

This *catarrhus aestivus* [hayfever] has been traced back—I need only mention this here—to certain substances that are supposed to be contained in the pollen dust of the *gramineae*.⁴¹ This only corresponds to the tendency of our time to attribute pathology to directly physical substances and external things. If we look at the human organism from a spiritual-scientific point of view, as well as at the processes which take place in the environment of the human being when the *gramineae* blossom, then we can definitely say that the whole natural process in the season when the *gramineae* blossom takes place not only around the *gramineae*, but also around the human being, who is exposed to the same atmospheric influences under which the *gramineae* blossom.

Now, in a human being, when they have, I would like to say, specialized in the organization just towards the nose, the eyes, which then leads to *catarrhus aestivus*, when that, which under the preponderance of the nerve-sense process has then led to the *exudative diathesis*⁴² in childhood—localized to the start of the respiratory organs on the inside—then just this annoying catarrh⁴³ can occur. It then arises from the fact that the human being is now also exposed to those natural processes to which the *gramineae* must be exposed during flowering and is particularly sensitive to these natural processes.

By the fact that the sensory process is not sufficiently paralyzed by the metabolic process, that the sensory process remains preponderant in the periphery of the organism, we have exposed the human being to the same atmospheric influences, to the influences of his environment, which are also favorable for the blossoming of the *gramineae*.

If one sees through this process externally, if one really goes into what happens as a natural process in the flowering of the grasses, the *gramineae*, then you say to yourself, how do you get to this sensitivity that occurs in the *Catarrhus aestivus*? And now, through this insight that you have gained, you try to paralyze the process that occurs in the *gramineae*, the process that takes place in such a way that it occurs completely outwardly, peripherally, in the air. Because it is then also present in the human being, when a person has *catarrhus aestivus*. By seeking out the fructification process, the rushing to the fructification process, which is what the *gramineae* does when it looks out into the atmosphere in complete nakedness. Then you look for where this process occurs, not peripherally directed outward, but centrally pushed inward. And you find it if you take such fruits as are surrounded by leather-like shells and with which the fructification process takes place centrally inward, centripetally. And if you thus form in the laboratory the opposite process of the fructification process in the *gramineae*, if you form that into a remedy, and if you try to make this remedy effective by applying it by injection, by vaccination, that is, by introducing it directly into the organism by inoculation, then you can actually counteract this hypersensitivity to the same atmospheric influences which are favorable in the *gramineae* but excite a disease process in the human being. With this remedy, which we manufacture as “Gencydo” and which has proved to be extraordinarily effective in an overwhelming percentage of cases of *catarrhus aestivus*, we have been able to see how it is possible to arrive at remedies by creating the corresponding formative processes that nature actually demonstrates for us.

We only have to know which natural process we have to work against. This is the case, for example, with a preponderance primarily of the sense-nerve activity, and we then see that we have to go with that natural process. It is only necessary to know how to proceed in each case. But not only do we use what has to be done chemically in the laboratory either in emphasizing natural processes or in working contrary to the natural processes. For what we are dealing with as healing factors uses not only substances, but above all else we must pay attention to the method of preparation by looking at what in external outer nature brings about the process as such, what constitutes the dynamic in the process. We try to imitate this dynamic in a technical way in order to extract the healing properties from nature.

According to such principles, remedies have already been produced in abundance at the Clinical-Therapeutic Institute in Arlesheim. They are all produced according to this principle, but each one is completely specialized.

On Preparing Remedies such as for Hay Fever

The excerpt below is taken from the first of two lectures held in London on September 2nd and 3rd, 1923. They were titled *Pathology, Therapy, and the Production of Remedies on the Basis of Spiritual Science*. The text is based on the stenogram by Helene Finckh, and was first published in a periodical in 1953, and then as part of the Collected Works in volume 319 in 1971. This translation is from the 1994 3rd edition. These lectures came toward the end of a month-long tour of England where Steiner held two full cycles of lectures and a half dozen additional single and double presentations. While in England Steiner would lecture in German, pause about every twenty minutes, and his translator would stand up reproduce the preceding portion of the lecture on the spot in English. The stenographer would record only the German version. This pair of lectures was given to a fairly large audience consisting primarily of English medical doctors.

Steiner:

And in this way, by looking both at the processes in nature and at the processes that can be recognized in a pathology, you are then able to bring about the mutual interplay of those processes found in nature with those processes in the human organism. This interaction is what we are trying to create when we introduce the relevant processes from nature into the human organism as healing processes. What matters is the introduction of healing processes by means of the processes we perform in our laboratories. Therefore it is of special importance how these remedies are introduced in accordance with the differentiation of the human organism. The effect of a remedy is fundamentally different when it is introduced through the digestive process, by injection⁴⁴ directly into the circulatory system, or whether it is applied, as I shall show tomorrow, in a manner more closely related to the sense process, to the nerve-sense process, such as by the addition of our remedies to baths or ablutions and the like. So whether you apply the remedy externally or partially internally, I would like to say, as in the case of injection⁴⁵, or completely internally, it depends again on how you wish to influence the human organism. For I would like to say that the particularly significant thing about these remedies is that we do not want to heal through substances, but we want to heal through processes. And we give remedies in the hope—that is, the remedies have already been verified to work—that the processes, which we identify by looking at nature and at the human being together, are conserved, as it were, in the preparation and are triggered once more when introduced into the human organism as healing processes. That is the essentially new thing about the approach we are studying. We want to heal through procedures, processes, through the method of production.

That is why it is not so important for us to explain exactly what is in the preparation, because what is important is the intimate way that these processes play out.

Hayfever – to a Lay Audience

This excerpt comes from a presentation on December 9th, 1922 to the construction workers building Steiner's conference center, the Goetheanum. Steiner walked in cold to these meetings, and was handed the questions for that day. On this day the assembled workers wanted to know about infectiousness and, second, about hay fever. The text is contained in volume 348 of the Collected Works, based on a stenogram by Helene Finckh. It was first published in 1959, and the translation is based on the fourth edition of 1997.

Steiner:

The person in question has been suffering from hay fever for years. He has now heard that the patient should be treated beforehand. It would be better to do the injections in January, February, rather than when he was suffering from the disease. A doctor in Basel told him that. It goes better in the blood. Should he do the same with the hay fever remedy?

Dr. Steiner: That is correct; there is only one small catch. Namely, this very remedy, which is used in our country, is suitable, as they say, to use prophylactically, that is, in advance, and should actually be used for weeks before the hay fever excitation occurs; but the only catch is that the patients only come when they are plagued by hay fever.

Now just today we have received a very interesting letter where someone writes about another hay fever remedy. The inventor of the other hay fever remedy writes that his hay fever remedy actually only helps as a relief against the individual attack of hay fever, while he himself believes that our hay fever remedy, especially if it is used twice in succession, at longer intervals, permanently relieves the patient from hay fever.

The thing is, of course, that we would much prefer the sick to be treated in January or February instead of May or June. But as a rule—and this is understandable—the patient comes when the disease has already somehow broken out.

But now it is so with our hay fever remedy that if one treats the sick person with it even during the external illness, which is only the final conclusion of an internal illness—especially if you use it again after a year; you need not use it again and again. It still protects you from being attacked again, because it is actually reckoned that the illness always lies in the whole organism and only comes out particularly in one individual organ.”

Steiner then takes a digression into the nature of illness, and discusses the “water being” inside the human being that is out of balance when hay fever strikes. Pollen, he says, is only a trigger.

Steiner:

Only, these plant pollens are such that they are difficult to tolerate if you already have hay fever. They do not cause hay fever, but they irritate. Now, you see, our hay fever remedy is based directly on the fact that it contracts this extended water-being inside the human body again, so that it becomes somewhat opaque, and that which it has dissolved, it secretes again. Our remedy is terribly simple. It is based only on the fact that you contract the whole water-being again to its normal shape. As a result, it becomes somewhat cloudy at first, and one must then take care that afterwards the person does not retain in their body that which is secreted out of the water. Therefore it is good if a person, after he has been injected⁴⁶ with our hay fever remedy, can, for example, sweat a little or move around. If afterwards, just after being injected with the remedy, they do something that does not result in proper perspiration, or if they are given the hay fever remedy when they are particularly suffering from constipation, then it is always somewhat difficult with the inoculation⁴⁷. For example, if you vaccinate⁴⁸ with the hay fever remedy, you should ask the patient if they are suffering from constipation just at that time. Because if they suffer from constipation, then just by contracting the water-being, too much accumulates and is not eliminated right away. This is not good. If the patient says they are constipated when they are injected,⁴⁹ they should be given a laxative at the same time.

Healing does not only consist—that is always important, gentlemen⁵⁰—of teaching something to somebody, but in arranging the whole of life so that the human body behaves in the right way relative to what it has been taught. This is, of course, extremely important, otherwise you can really drive someone into illness. If you inject⁵¹ someone with some kind of remedy, which is very good, an excellent remedy, and then do not see to it that they have the right digestion, that everything gets eliminated that was produced by the remedy, then you make them sicker than they were before.

This is so important, especially with the right remedies, that the physician does not merely know: for this disease I use this or that, but that they know how to go about asking questions of the individual patient. This is the greatest medical art, that when any sick person appears, you ask them the right questions, so that you know the patient to a certain degree. This is of immense importance. It is strange, for example, that you meet doctors who speak of a sick person, and one asks them: How old is the patient? – and they have not asked the patient at all! But this is so important that you have to treat a fifty-year-old quite differently, although with the same means, than a forty-year-old. But then you do not have to be so schematic that you say: For this and that disease this and that remedy is good. There is a big difference if you want to help someone who is constantly suffering from diarrhea with a remedy or if you want to help someone who is constantly suffering from constipation.

The Cowpox Vaccine and Why Animal Remedies Work Differently

The excerpt below is taken from the second of two lectures held in London on September 2nd and 3rd, 1923. They were titled *Pathology, Therapy, and the Production of Remedies on the Basis of Spiritual Science*. From volume 319 of the Collected Works.

Steiner:

The following is especially interesting because, in the spiritually based medicine mentioned yesterday, products from the animal kingdom are already taken for certain types of illness. For example, a secretion of the *hypophysis cerebri*,⁵² the brain appendage, has been used with success on children with rickets, or in cases of deformities of limbs in infancy and the like. But not only this secretion, also other products of the animal organism act on the human etheric body, to strengthen it or weaken it. In essence they have their main effect there.

That which is directly inoculated⁵³ from one human being to another has only a significance for the physical organization of the human being. That which is inoculated⁵⁴ from one human being to another has a mere physical effect. This is very interesting. For example, if blood is transferred from one human being to another, then you have only to reckon with what blood can produce on the organism as a physical effect.

This could be studied particularly well at the time when the transition was made from smallpox vaccination with human fluid to cowpox vaccination, where you could directly follow how the effect on the physical body in the earlier vaccine taken from a human being moved up, so to speak, by using the animal vaccine, into the etheric body. Thus we can say: We are able to survey—if we develop spiritual vision—how nature gradually affects the human being. We observe how the human being, through their ego organization, draws into themselves, so to speak, the spirit of the mineral kingdom; how the human being draws into itself, through the astral organization, the spirit of the plant kingdom; through their etheric organization, the spirit, the spiritual of the animal kingdom; and through their physical organization, merely the physical aspect of the human being. There we can no longer speak of the spirit. Already in the case of the animal organization, which acts on the etheric body, we can no longer really speak of the spiritual, but only of the etheric in the animal itself.

To come to these connections really only gives a true view of the whole way in which the human being in a healthy and sick state is placed in nature. But you also get an inner view of the continuing development of nature in the human organism. And when you then have to go further, you have to ask: How should you behave, for example, in the case of something like carcinoma, cancer? We have seen yesterday that the etheric body develops too strong a force by itself in the place of any organ. The centrifugal forces, that is, the forces wanting to go out into the cosmos, become too strong. The astral body and the ego organization are not able to counteract this in a sufficient way. Now you are guided by what you have spiritually recognized. You say to yourself, now you can try: either you must make the astral body stronger, then you must turn to the plant kingdom, or you must push back the etheric body in its effectiveness, then you would have to turn to the animal kingdom.

On Smallpox and Rabies

This excerpt is from another session with the construction workers, on January 27th, 1923. The question had to do with pulse and breathing. It is in volume 348 of the Collected Works.

Steiner:

So what is smallpox? Smallpox actually consists of breathing too much on the outer surface of the body or in the lungs, that too much activity is developed there. The person becomes completely active on the surface. Through this activity, everything becomes inflamed.

And what can you do for that under those circumstances? Well, people are already doing what they can do on their own. That is that they now inoculate⁵⁵ cowpox lymph. Yes, what does cowpox lymph actually do? If I inject⁵⁶ it into the blood, I bring it into the inside of the body, because the blood goes around everywhere. And while usually the blood is kept safe from the outside, now it must do something with the injected⁵⁷ lymph, and this prevents the other activity on the surface. So the cowpox vaccination already has a certain meaning. The blood, which is not properly occupied at the liver, becomes occupied by the lymph itself. In general, all injection⁵⁸ methods have a very positive effect, and you may have heard that a large portion of our remedies are also based on injection,⁵⁹ thereby an activity that is in an improper place can be directed to another place in the human body.

The canine rabies vaccination is particularly interesting. Rabies is caused by something completely different, but basically it is the same dynamic that I have just explained to you. For example, a man is bitten by a mad dog, or by a mad wolf. Yes, such a mad animal, when it has rabies, has real poison inside its saliva. This poison will now flow into the man at the bite, and the man becomes busy detoxifying this poison. The man may be too weak to do so, and he may perish from it. But this perishing is actually based on something else. You know, the man in this example actually gets the rabies. He not only perishes from the poison of the rabies, but he actually gets rabies himself. What is the basis for that? Suppose I am bitten by a mad dog here. Now I have to direct my inner activity to this place, I have to let it flow here, so that the poison is consumed. This activity is felt by my spinal cord, and it is just like when I get a shock from something. That is how it is for my spinal cord. Because I suddenly have to develop such a strong activity through the dog bite, my spinal cord gets a fright, as they say, a shock. Through this fright I myself become ill. What do I have to do now to stop this fright? As you know, when a person becomes stiff with fright, they regain consciousness if they are given a proper jolt. So you have to give the spinal cord a good jolt. But first you have to get to the spinal cord.⁶⁰ And you can get to the spinal cord if you quickly kill a rabbit, take the spinal cord out of the rabbit and dry it at about twenty degrees Celsius. But you have to make the rabbit rabid first; you have to give it rabies poison. Then you take out the spinal cord and dry it for twenty minutes at twenty degrees Celsius. And this dried spinal cord, which one has, is now injected into the person suffering from rabies. Now the substances have the peculiar way that every substance in the body goes to a certain place. And this dried rabbit spinal cord, which contained the rabies poison for a short time—it only contains the rabies poison for about fifteen minutes, a quarter of an hour, then it is consumed, but in these fifteen minutes it is good, then it is injected into the person. Then it goes into their own spinal cord, and that gets a counter-shock. It is just as if you shake a person who is completely paralyzed by fright, and the person now again begins not to be angry, or they can also be protected by the fact that they heal their spinal cord from the fright by the injected, poisoned, and dried up rabbit spinal cord. So you see, if a person develops an activity in a wrong place and is ill

because of it, they must be cured by developing almost the same activity in another place. These are the complicated relationships in the human organism.

Smallpox and Immunization

This discussion of smallpox vaccination comes from a workshop held on April 22nd, 1924 during a conference for doctors in Dornach. The editors of the German edition note that it is based on “a transcript of fragmentary character.” It is contained in volume 314 of the Collected Works. Translation is from the revised 3rd edition of 1989.

Q&A with practicing doctors

What are the conditions for the emergence of a smallpox epidemic? It seems that this disease has lost its malignant character. I have observed cases like this. What does spiritual science say about vaccination?

In this case, as in smallpox, the individual human being has to deal with a strong withdrawal of the ego-organization from all three other bodies—the physical as well as the etheric and astral bodies. This strong resignation, this weakening of the ego-organization, can be based on the fact that a person slips strongly with their present ego into the egos of their former earth lives; and through this a strong affinity of the ego-organization to the spiritual world is present. It is notable with smallpox that there is a certain similarity with what a person goes through when they undergo certain forms of initiation. Strange as it may seem, it is so. For example, when a person inwardly becomes really familiar with the effect of the zodiacal forms on the human being, such states of knowledge are connected with strong inner upheavals. At least the person can go through what is present in the smallpox disease, in that it is more governed, has more of a soul effect, because it is about the fact that in the smallpox disease the person lives very strongly in the spiritual world, even if in a different way. It can be said that the risk of infection is extremely high in the case of smallpox. However, one should not be so foolish as to immediately and always think of physical causes during transmission, rather in the case of smallpox the preexisting physical disposition is particularly pronounced.

One proof of this could be that you can protect yourself very well if you are able to close yourself off in a right way. I can say this for the following reason. When I was twenty-two years old—I needn't explain the circumstances—I taught a pupil whose mother was lying in the immediate vicinity with hemorrhagic smallpox, ⁶¹ separated only by a folding screen from the room where I gave my lessons. I did not take any precautions and continued the lessons the whole way through until the mother recovered. But I was quite happy to do this because I also wanted to see how you can protect yourself if you take the smallpox patient, including those suffering from hemorrhagic smallpox, entirely objectively like any other object, like a stone or a bush, against which you have no further feelings of fear or other psychological impulses but take it as an objective fact. Thereby you do indeed counter the risk of infection to a high degree.

This shows that the psychological factor can also play a pronounced role in infection. I have never been afraid of exposing myself to the possibility of infection and have never been infected, never suffered an infectious disease. By this experience I have been able to determine that the mere consciousness, the powerful consciousness of the existence of a disease in the astral body can become the cause of the disease itself. The strong consciousness of an illness can, from the astral body, become the cause of the illness.

And the smallpox vaccine? Here you are dealing with a peculiar case. You see, if you vaccinate someone, and you have the person in an anthroposophical context and you educate them anthroposophically, it does not do them any harm. It only harms those who grow up with predominantly materialistic thoughts. In that case the inoculation becomes a kind of ahrimanic force; the person cannot elevate themselves from a certain materialistic feeling. And that is actually what is worrying about the smallpox inoculation, that people are almost being clothed with a phantom. The person has a phantom which prevents them from getting their spiritual entities as far away from the physical organism as normal in consciousness. They become constitutionally materialistic. They can no longer lift themselves to the spiritual. That is what is at stake with vaccination.

Of course it is a matter of statistics always being introduced. The question is whether it is precisely in these matters that so much importance should be attached to statistics. With smallpox, vaccination is very much a matter of something psychological. It cannot be ruled out that the belief that the vaccination will help plays an incalculably important role. If one would replace this belief with another one, if one would educate people according to nature, so that they would be impressable by something other than the idea that they have been inoculated—for instance by bringing people closer to the spirit again—it would be quite possible to fight against the unconscious intrusion that says: Oh no, a smallpox epidemic! - through complete consciousness of the following: here is something spiritual, albeit an unjustified spiritual phenomenon, against which I must hold myself upright! - would work just as well in order to make people strong against such influences.

Cataracts and Belladonna

This excerpt is from another session with the construction workers, on June 23rd, 1923, and contained in volume 350 of the Collected Works. Rather than beginning with a question, Steiner opened with a clarification from the previous presentation, on the human eye. Quite a ways in he winds up at the nature of the Earth, and then continues:

Steiner:

So, when we imagine the Earth, we have to think that this Earth is surrounded everywhere, first of all by the etheric, but then also by the astral. Now the astral penetrates everywhere. But the plants generally do not absorb the astral. They have only an etheric body. They absorb only the etheric, they do not absorb the astral. But there are certain plants that absorb the astral. These are the poisonous plants. And this is the difference between the non-poisonous plants and the poisonous plants: The non-poisonous plants have no astrality in them, and the poisonous plants have an astrality in them.

You see, one of the most poisonous plants is belladonna. If you have deadly nightshade, the deadly nightshade is as black as you find it because of the astrality that is absorbed into it. So the belladonna absorbs the astral. However, gentlemen, because the belladonna absorbs the astral—in reality it does not destroy itself completely—it has the power within itself to destroy other physical matter continuously. Belladonna is quite sharp inside; it wants to destroy physical matter. Therefore, when we eat belladonna, as soon as it enters us, the belladonna juice immediately begins to destroy our inner matter. Then we must perish under the belladonna. Belladonna has the power internally to destroy physical matter. Think, we now bring in the right way, by injecting⁶² it, quite diluted, properly diluted belladonna extract into the blood of a person. Then, when the ocular lens begins to get salts, to darken—just through the belladonna juice, when it is properly diluted, when it has become so thin that it no longer has a poisonous effect—we can fight these cataracts, this illness, disperse that which has arisen as a condensation. ... So, if we have brought the destructive juice of belladonna, which drives apart everything else everywhere, to the lens by a proper injection,⁶³ then it also drives apart the salts that have been deposited there, and the ocular lens can in certain circumstances be cured. Of course, if the cataract is already too advanced, one cannot rely too much on this story. But if you notice it at the right time in a person where the cataract is not yet so advanced, then without having to operate on the lens later, you can still fight the cataract. Therefore, operating is usually not something that homeopathic doctors do. They give a diluted solution of belladonna. It works topically, too, but not very strongly; the cataracts always come back.⁶⁴ So usually you can not do anything that way. But you can do a lot if you inject⁶⁵ it into the blood. The blood then goes everywhere, even into the eye.

From this you can also observe something else. Namely, you observe this: If we have such a poison as that of belladonna, if we eat a lot of belladonna—a little is enough, of course, but imagine a lot in this case—if we eat a significant amount of belladonna, it destroys our physical matter from the stomach, already from the gullet. We can no longer live. If we dilute this belladonna juice more and more, then the physical parts are no longer attacked, but the belladonna juice is digested and still attacks the head very strongly. You can then use the highly diluted belladonna juice when people have become quite nervous, when they have become dizzy, to straighten them out again by giving them highly diluted belladonna juice to drink, which expels what has been deposited there. But if you make it so diluted that it doesn't even affect the head anymore, it still affects the eye. The eye is the organ that is sensitive to the slightest amounts of belladonna. Belladonna, “the beautiful woman,” is its name: Belladonna, because it is so beautifully black-eyed.⁶⁶ So the human eye is still sensitive to the smallest amounts of belladonna juice. So it is really wonderful how our human being is receptive to the different substances of the environment in the most varied way. As I already said, too much belladonna juice destroys the whole eye, but in high dilutions the eye is receptive to the belladonna juice. Other organs are receptive to other juices. So for each substance something in our body is particularly receptive and the various juices cause different things.”

Editor:

Interestingly, Steiner appears to have been correct overall in his description of Belladonna, but incorrect on the exact mechanism. Belladonna does not “destroy” matter in the body in the manner of an acid or other sort of chemical reaction such as bleach unleashes, which is clearly the suggestion in his phrasing. Instead, one of the primary compounds in Belladonna chemically blocks the action of the neurotransmitter called acetylcholine (ACh) at synapses in the central and peripheral nervous system. This creates all sorts of chaos in the organism because the important signaling of the nervous system is inhibited. Now in Steiner's view of medicine, the nerve-sense organism is the bearer of the astral body. So he has very correctly perceived that the astrality in Belladonna destroys the connection of the astral body to the physical. Only the mechanism is a bit different than what he describes. Conventional medicine has developed an entire class of drugs based off of the compounds in Belladonna, which are used to treat a wide range of ailments.

Bee Stings and Immunity

This excerpt is from another session with the construction workers, on December 12th, 1923, and contained in volume 351 of the Collected Works. For the previous several sessions the discussion had been about the nature of bees and beekeeping. This conversation continued on this day with more back-and-forth than usual.

Steiner:

But this is the peculiar thing: Everything that can make a person ill or kill them can also heal them. And this is the great responsibility which you have in the preparation of remedies, because there are no useful remedies which, if they are used incorrectly, cannot produce the same diseases which they are supposed to cure. So, if you can produce a certain fainting or even death in a person by the bee venom, what is going on? You see, when a person faints, the astral body and especially the ego withdraws from their physical body, goes out as in sleep. But in sleep this happens in a healthy way. In fainting it happens in a pathological way. In unconsciousness the ego remains stuck; in sleep it comes out completely. If a person has a weak ego organization, they cannot bring the ego back in. They must be shaken, and shaken so that they wake up from unconsciousness. Their breathing must be made stronger, and so on.

You have to apply some artificial methods and substances. You also know: In such cases you have to take the front arms of the person, cross them over the chest, put them back, and then again forward. That's how you do this artificial breathing with someone who has fainted. This artificial breathing always consists in the fact that you want to bring the ego-organization correctly into the organism.

But now suppose: Someone has rheumatism or even gout or other deposits in the body. In this case also you must try to strengthen the ego-organization. Because why do you have rheumatism or gout? Because the ego organization is too weak. It doesn't get the blood moving properly. It has to be stimulated. If the blood is not moving properly, it flows too slowly for the organism concerned. Then small crystals are deposited everywhere, and they then go into the vicinity of the blood veins. These small crystals consist of uric acid. They fill the whole body. This is gout or rheumatism. There, the ego organization is too weak.

If I now give a person the right dose of bee or wasp venom, their ego organization will be strengthened. But you must not give too much, otherwise the ego-organization cannot assert itself. But if you give just enough to strengthen the ego-organization, you can produce a very good remedy with bee venom or wasp venom. Only you must mix it with another remedy. Such remedies are produced. For example, the old so-called Tartarus remedy is fabricated in a similar way, but from other substances.

So one can always produce medicines simply by means of these toxins, as for example here for the strengthening of the ego-organization. But when you use such a remedy, you must know the patient in question. Let us say, for example, that someone has gout or rheumatism. The first question is this: Is their heart healthy? That is, does their heart function well under the action of the blood circulation? If this is the case, then they can be cured with bee or wasp venom. If their heart is not healthy, then a distinction must be made. In the case of nervous heart diseases, it does not do much harm, but if you have a heart disease that comes from a valve defect, you must be very careful with such a remedy. It has a very strong effect on the valve, on the heart, this bee or wasp venom. If the valve is diseased, then these remedies should not be used at all. And that is the issue.

That is why it is so dangerous to say in general, any random remedy is a remedy for this or that disease. You can quite well say: I will make a preparation, a remedy. I will put wasp venom or bee venom into it—we even have such a remedy already—mix it with some binding agents, with gelatinous or other binding agents from plants, then it is put into an ampoule, and then it is injected,⁶⁷ just as the bee sting is also injected. The only difference is that the reaction to the bee sting is much greater. And you can fabricate this remedy and you can claim: a remedy for rheumatism!

Yes, gentlemen, but that is not the only concern you have. The bigger concern is whether the sick person can tolerate the remedy according to his general organic state of health. Those remedies which go deeper into the organism must really only be given when the patient has really been examined according to their general state of health. You have to know everything about their state of health. Therefore, if you find remedies somewhere which are simply advertised as this or that remedies, then they are mostly such remedies as can do little harm and yet are useful. Such remedies can be put on the market. You can also agree with this stance even if in reality there are also somewhat unpleasant consequences. Curing always has unpleasant consequences. The sick person always has to overcome the post-cure when they are cured of an illness.

Today, a lot of people are being treated who are not really sick. And before the war, this was much more the case. Doctors suffer the most in the countries with weak currencies,⁶⁸ because people don not allow themselves to be cured so much anymore. In the past, the healthy, the lightly ill, the sick, the very seriously ill could be treated; now only the seriously ill can be treated in Central European countries!

Now, if you are a terribly strong fellow and you get rheumatism—usually it is not really rheumatism, but it is gouty conditions—then a bee sting, as Mr. Burle said, can have an extraordinarily beneficial effect on you. You can be cured because you can tolerate the reaction. But it is usually the case that an ordinary human child, if they have rheumatism, can naturally tolerate a correct dose of bee venom, which is prepared for them, as a remedy, and can also be cured with it. But a whole bee sting, as a rule, will not help. Such a strong inflammation will occur that then the body has to heal the inflammation; the bee venom will be eliminated as quickly as possible, and then none of the bee venom will remain for the rheumatism. With normal people it will be quite so that not much will remain.

But now let us take the following case. Rheumatism can also occur in the following way: A person does not work much, but eats a lot. Most of the time they will have a healthy heart, if they do not work much, but eat a lot, then the story starts to take a different turn.

Now the heart is an extraordinarily resistant organ, and it can actually only be spoiled from the inside over the course of years, if it is not spoiled by heredity or from youth. But such a person, who eats extraordinarily much, typically also drinks a lot of alcohol with their meal. This stimulates the ego organization, the blood circulation very violently. The heart can no longer keep up in its beating. Poison, uric acid and so on, are deposited everywhere. Under certain circumstances, the heart is quite strong for a long time, and gout and rheumatism are already everywhere. Under certain circumstances, a bee sting can do an extraordinarily good service for such a person.

Mr. Burle: I do not know whether there was a little bit of alcoholism in the person we are talking about.

Dr. Steiner: You mean you have not investigated it?

You see, especially when you have such remedies as bee venom—and it is a powerful remedy—you must be quite clear about the fact that you must pay extraordinary attention to the state of health of the whole person.

Mr. Muller says that he got rheumatism from a cold, treated it with sunshine, which made it go away; this summer it set in again somewhat. He also believed that bee stings could help; but he once had an unfortunate day when he was stung on both legs and had about thirty-two bee stings. The only disadvantage he felt was that he had rainbow-like colors for eight days. There were also not always swellings. The human body is built in different ways. As already mentioned: One person can die from a bee sting, while another, for example, has had sixty stings without his heart beating faster. One person is just more resistant than the other.

Dr. Steiner: When you got all those bee stings, had you been working with bees for a long time?

Mr. Müller: Many years!

You may not remember the first time you were stung. When you are stung for the first time, you feel the effect more or less strongly. The man you told us about was certainly stung by a bee for the first time. And once you have had such a poison in the body, that is, in the blood, you become more and more capable of coming up against this poison, more and more immunized,⁶⁹ as they say. So if you have been stung a little bit in the beginning of your beekeeping and you are otherwise a heart-healthy person, this has had such an effect on you that you become more and more insensitive. If you know you are healthy, you can even do it in such a way that you are stung once by a bee, so that you can then continue to be stung; the phenomena then occur, so you get rainbow colors and so on, but it runs on the outside. The blood is immunized. It depends not only on the organization, but on what has been put into the blood before. I am surprised that the doctor who observed what you told did not tell him: The second time it will not affect so badly, and the third time he will be immunized. - But maybe his heart was so unwell that he could not be exposed to the danger. You have to take that into account as well.

Really, today it is only such a dangerous story because there are doctors who think that every beekeeper must be vaccinated at the outset, before they start. When people are sent off to war, they are pumped up with all sorts of poisons. This is again not something that can be generally recommended. Of course, this is also not a good idea, because the blood can develop a sort of rubbish-buildup. The blood is always somewhat deteriorated by the fact that you get these things injected. This balances itself out again after some time. After some time, the blood is indeed healthy again, and it is protected against new poisons of the same kind.

Concluding Thoughts

In an age where so much self-assertion, opinion, and debate is predicated on what the speaker feels is best for him- or herself, Steiner offers an entirely different interpretive framework. An entirely new discursive structure. Any argument from self-interest in the area of vaccination supposedly based on Steiner's worldview is necessarily a misinterpretation. Steiner's discursive space is anti-materialism. Polemicists do not represent Steiner accurately when they throw in a few random quotes to show why all vaccines are bad, or (less commonly) vaccines are an unmitigated good. Yet almost all of the debate today pro and contra vaccines is fundamentally based on materialistic assumptions. Quotes from Steiner should not be employed to win these kinds of arguments. Such an approach is not true to his overall worldview, his ethics, or his direct statements. It is discouraging to see so many of Steiner's most deeply learned followers attacked on social media and elsewhere because they are not anti-vaccination absolutists. This is even more distressing than watching outright materialists attacking followers of Steiner for not being entirely in the pro-vaccine camp. Materialists at least have a consistent worldview (although there are plenty of grounds to be vaccine-skeptical entirely from a materialist perspective). Pro Steiner anti-vaccination absolutists have not engaged sufficiently with his work overall. His legacy in this area is very nuanced. Hopefully this collection of all of Steiner's material on the topic will serve to create a fuller picture.

Readers looking for guidance on how to approach the issue of vaccination in the 2020s and beyond will have a difficult time gleaning supporting evidence in this book for one view or the other. This is because Steiner has a fundamentally different orientation to illness, as well as a great respect for science, even when he is very clear about his differences. Steiner lived and breathed the idea of reincarnation, and in that regard was not particularly disturbed by the idea that someone might die. Not only was that natural, but it was merely an evolution in the development of their spirit, not any sort of final ending. Plenty of his more committed followers today share this view, but this very out-of-the-mainstream perspective certainly has some bearing on Steiner's opinion of the value of vaccination. Summed up, Steiner generally considered vaccination unnecessary, but if unavoidable considered it no big deal either. That vaccination (at least against diseases common in his day) was by and large unnecessary has entirely to do with Steiner's view of karma, in which an individual exists on a continuum from many past lives through many future ones. If someone dies in this life due to some form of infectious illness, they have gathered valuable soul forces from the experience that will aid them in a future life.

Further, for Steiner, people died all the time by accident, by true coincidence. Because for Steiner, karma is not deterministic, but is rather a great law of attraction and repulsion that explains both the unequal distribution of capacities amongst humanity, as well as many features of an individual destiny. But Steiner did not believe in predestination in the narrower sense. He was not a proponent of the attitudes towards predestination espoused by Augustine, Luther, or Calvin.

Like so much else in his work, Steiner leaves it to individual judgment to determine which portions of an individual destiny are the influence of past actions, and which are truly coincidence. In the case of an epidemic, he explains, plenty of people die who are not necessarily karmically determined to that fate. The experience simply becomes part of their forward moving karma, as the future then balances out whatever unfairness came from their untimely death. To those not already thoroughly convinced by his view, such considerations must offer little comfort, especially in the middle of a plague.

Steiner is also clear that the great advances in medicine and hygiene since the end of the 18th century are related to the overall development of humanity and are not to be rejected out of hand. In fact, his answer to the ethical question of whether to make use of the latest medical technology or hygienic advances is that you are actually obligated to use every tool at your disposal, with the warning that preventing the physical illness is not a complete healing so long as the conditions that lead to susceptibility are not also worked through.

This is the paradox in Steiner's thought. He places little importance on vaccination and the avoidance of communicable illness, and yet urges anyone who wishes to follow his guidance from a philosophical-ethical perspective to make full use of every available technology to the degree that is appropriate. And today's entire field of argument hinges on that last phrase, to the degree appropriate. As for how to make those determinations, there is not much guidance available in this book.⁷⁰ Nonetheless it should be a very fruitful background against which to ponder these very modern medical questions.

About the Translator

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VIRAL ILLNESS AND EPIDEMICS
IN THE WORK OF RUDOLF STEINER

Edited and Translated by Daniel Hindes

Collected in this book are all of Rudolf Steiner's statements on viral illnesses and epidemics. Spanning over thirty years and arranged in chronological order, these extended excerpts are drawn from 35 separate volumes of the Collected Works. Several of these statements have never before been published in English. Newly translated from the latest German editions, they serve as an invaluable resource for anyone interested in exploring Steiner's views on health and illness in relation to pathogens and infectious diseases.

VRIL: THE POWER OF THE COMING RACE

Edward Bulwer-Lytton

Regarded by many as Bulwer-Lytton's best novel, *Vril: The Power of The Coming Race* is a powerful novel that fired the imagination of readers starting in the 1870's. Among the earliest examples of what would become the genre of science fiction, among many authors it influenced H. G. Wells, Samuel Butler, and Edgar Rice Burroughs. The book tells the story of a young American adventurer who discovers a portal to an underground world at the bottom of a mine shaft. In this world lives a highly advanced race, with a dark secret. This is the original English version. Steiner requested that his personal secretary, Guenther Wachsmuth, translate it into German. A copy of that 1923 translation is in Steiner's library.

¹ See *Viral Illness and Epidemics in the Work of Rudolf Steiner*, also from Aelzina Books.

² Jenner's significance is not so much that he was the first to experiment with cowpox injections—he was not—but that he proved by subsequently exposing his subjects first to cowpox, then to smallpox, that they had indeed obtained immunity. The evidence in his write-ups, and their subsequent validation by other physicians, overcame considerable opposition to the idea and made him a hero of the scientific establishment. Smallpox was eventually declared eliminated by the WHO in 1980 due, in the eyes of science, to prophylactic immunization using his method. Unease with the process of vaccination existed from the beginning, something Steiner commented on (see the chapter on *Smallpox, Karma, and Vaccination* on page 28).

³ Romans 6:23

⁴ In Arthur Schopenhauer's *Complete Works* in 12 Volumes, edited with an introduction by Rudolf Steiner (in German). Published by Cotta, in Stuttgart, 1894. The quote is in Volume 1, page 12, the next quote in Volume 6, page 139.

⁵ *Das Problem des Lebens* (The Problem of Life), published 1906, the same year as this lecture.

⁶ The German is *Wilde*, which literally means “wild one” but is typically translated “savage”. However, savage has connotations in English that are more negative than *Wilde* does in German.

⁷ Paracelsus: Philippus Aureolus Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim(1493-1541), was a Swiss physician, alchemist, lay theologian, and philosopher of the German Renaissance era. A pioneer of medical chemistry, he is known for several innovative models, including the Mercury-Sulphur-Salt model of alchemy, and his elaboration of the Macrocosm-Microcosm views of the Kabbalists into his Doctrine of Signatures, which Steiner references here. Historians of science, medicine, and toxicology credit him with pioneering these fields with his emphasis on the direct observation of phenomena and experimentation, at a time when his contemporaries preferred studying the writings of the Ancients.

⁸ *African Trypanosomiasis*, also known as “sleeping sickness”, is caused by microscopic parasites of the species *Trypanosoma brucei*. It is transmitted by the tsetse fly (*Glossina* species). This disease was originally enzootic and affected only wild animals, and has been documented in over 150 species including mammals and birds, which served as reservoirs. With their introduction to the region, it has spread to domestic animals such as horses, cattle and dogs. In dogs death can be as quick as three weeks or take as long as three years, with cause of death being inflammation of the heart muscles. Even with modern drugs it is considered remarkably difficult to treat in canines. Decades of research have to date failed to develop a vaccine for dogs or other mammals.

⁹ The German word here is *Wilden*, literally “wild ones.” The conventional translation is “savage”, but that has stronger negative connotations in English as *Wilden* does in German.

¹⁰ This principle remains to this day the means by which snake anti-venom is produced. Only today they use animals (often horses) injected with small doses of venom to produce the antibodies that are the active ingredient in anti-venom, rather than human subjects. It is also why the anti-venom has to be matched to the proper snake species in order to be effective.

¹¹ Justus Freiherr von Liebig (1803 –1873) One of the principal founders of the field of organic chemistry, his breakthroughs in plant nutrition and advances in fertilizers ended crop failure in Europe as a source of famine. Modern industrial agriculture, and most all of modern civilization, depends on his discoveries.

¹² Luciferic and Ahrimic principles: the two forces that oppose human progress in different ways. See Steiner’s book *Occult Science*.

¹³ Intellectual Soul: a stage in the development of consciousness in human history. See Steiner’s book *Theosophy*.

¹⁴ In the previous lecture Steiner had discussed the significance of cleanliness rituals in ancient cultures of the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC in general, and in Ancient Egypt in particular.

¹⁵ The previous era had focused on purifying the inner being by outer ritual; our era purifies the outer being because of an inner impulse.

¹⁶ At the 8th ecumenical council in Constantinople in 869 it was decreed that it was unchristian to speak of body, soul and spirit. The Catholic philosopher Otto Willmann (1839-1920), whose work was held in esteem by Rudolf Steiner, writes about this in his book *Geschichte des Idealismus* (History of Idealism), Braunschweig 1894, section VIII, § 54: “The abuse which the Gnostics made of the Pauline distinction between the pneumatikoi and the psychikoi, by passing off the former as the expression of perfection, and by declaring the latter to be representative of Christians captured by the law of the church, caused the church to explicitly reject the trichotomy”. - Rudolf Steiner spoke repeatedly about the significance of this council decision, among other places in the lectures of March 27, 1917 (in CW 175), February 5 and April 2, 1918 (in CW 181), of November 21, 1919 (in CW 194), of August 23 and September 1, 1919 (in CW 293).

¹⁷ In an earlier lecture in the series from which this was taken, Steiner observed: “There was a congress that took place in London in 1912 on a completely new science: eugenetics. It is common to have high-sounding names for what is in itself the most stupid of ideas. ... What does this eugenetics want? It wants to establish institutions so that in the future only a healthy human breed will be begotten, so that inferior individuals will not be conceived; it wants to gradually find laws by combining national economy and anthropology in order to bring men and women together by rules in such a way that a breed as strong as possible will come into being.” Steiner goes on to mock the topics introduced at the congress, such as a proposal to measure the cranial capacity of rich people compared to poor people, to determine who is fit to breed.

¹⁸ German: *Arzneimittel*: drug, pharmakon, medicine, pharmaceutical, remedy

¹⁹ German: *Arzneimittel*

²⁰ German: *Impfstoff*. I’ve seen this sentence a lot online to back the claim that all vaccines today are actually intended to produce the effect Steiner describes here. I am more skeptical, since Steiner is describing an intention as much as a substance, an intention that he later describes will become widely popular. I am not aware of any vaccines explicitly formulated to alter spiritual thoughts, unless you consider modern psychopharmacopeia, which even today is not given as a matter of course to all infants anywhere in the world, even if it is massively overprescribed to youth and the population in general.

²¹ German: *Impfstoff*

²² German: *impft* – third person present of to inject or vaccinate/inoculate

²³ German: *impfen* - to inject or vaccinate/inoculate

²⁴ German: *geimpft* – future tense of to inject or vaccinate/inoculate

²⁵ German: *Impfung* – noun form: injection or inoculation

²⁶ It wasn’t long before Steiner himself received similar treatment. In 1966 a clinical psychiatrist named Wolfgang Treher self-published a book in German titled *Hitler, Steiner, Schreber: A Contribution to the Phenomenology of Mental Illness*, in which he claimed that all of anthroposophy could be seen as the unbalanced meanderings of a schizophrenic. The book had little impact, beyond being quoted by anti-anthroposophical polemicists from time to time. They seem to particularly enjoy Steiner sharing a place with Hitler. This tendency to pathologize spiritual approaches that cannot easily be understood from a materialist perspective remains a feature of more academic biographers of Steiner in the 21st Century, though some have taken to suggesting that perhaps drug use explains Steiner’s “visions”.

[27](#) German: *impfen*

[28](#) German: *impft* – third person singular

[29](#) German: *impfen*

[30](#) In Steiner's cosmology, we are living in the 5th major cultural epoch after Atlantis. The 6th post-Atlantean period begins around the year 3500 AD.

[31](#) German: *Impfmittel*

[32](#) German: *impft* – inject, but also vaccinate

[33](#) German: *Impfung* – injection, but also vaccination

[34](#) German: *impfen* – inject, but also vaccinate

[35](#) German: *impfen*

[36](#) German: *Impfstoff* – vaccine, literally substance for injecting

[37](#) German: *Impfstoff*

[38](#) Steiner was actively promoting Social Threefolding in public lectures throughout Southern Germany. Competing political interests (communists as well as right-wing conservatives) vigorously opposed Steiner's activism—as well as each other—by means of mob violence. Security arrangements needed to be comprehensively planned before such a lecture. One attempt on Steiner's life at such a lecture was noted at the time by a reporter for the New York Times.

[39](#) The German word is *Mittel*, which literally translates as “means”, but can also be translated as remedy, resource, device, agent, method, measure, medicine, drug, or cure.

[40](#) Canine distemper is a contagious viral disease that attacks the respiratory, gastrointestinal, and nervous systems of puppies and dogs. The virus can also be found in wildlife such as foxes, wolves, coyotes, raccoons, skunks, mink and ferrets. It has also been reported in lions, tigers, leopards and other wild cats as well as seals.

[41](#) Gramineae: scientific name for the family of plants known as grass.

[42](#) “Exsudativen Diathese“ doesn't really translate. In English it describes a vitamin E deficiency in poultry. But in German medical terminology a Diathese is an inclination in the body to a specific type of illness, and exsudativen Diathese indicates an inflammatory skin diseases with fluid secretion or diseases with increased blood vessel permeability and formation of transudates.

[43](#) Catarrh: excessive discharge or buildup of mucus in the nose or throat, associated with inflammation of the mucous membrane.

[44](#) German: *Impfung*.

[45](#) German: *Impfung*.

[46](#) German: *geimpft*

[47](#) German: *Impfung*

[48](#) German: *impft*

[49](#) German: *geimpft*

⁵⁰ Unusually, for Steiner, this was an all-male audience.

⁵¹ German: *impfen*

⁵² Common name: pituitary gland. Steiner uses the Latin name in the original.

⁵³ German: *Hinübergeimpft* – a novel construction not in any dictionary, yet perfectly comprehensible to any German speaker. The four parts are: hin | über | ge | impft. *Hinüber* means moved over from one place to another; a fairly common compound word of there and over. *Geimpft* is the past perfect version of the verb to inject. The ge- prefix indicates the tense. Just another example of how creative Steiner was with the German language.

⁵⁴ German: *Hinübergeimpft* – again.

⁵⁵ German: *einimpfen*

⁵⁶ German: *einimpfe*

⁵⁷ German: *eingepfsten*

⁵⁸ German: *Impfungsmethoden*

⁵⁹ German: *Einimpfung*

⁶⁰ What Steiner describes next is exactly the process Louis Pasteur used to create the first rabies vaccine for humans in 1885.

⁶¹ A particularly severe form of smallpox characterized by bleeding under the skin.

⁶² German: *einimpfen*

⁶³ German: *Impfung* presumably into the blood, not into the eye itself.

⁶⁴ Belladonna is widely used in classical homeopathy, including for various eye disorders, up to and including cataracts. For eye disorders it was typically recommended topically—eye drops.

⁶⁵ German: *einimpft*

⁶⁶ Belladonna has been used as a psychoactive intoxicant for millenia. There is some evidence that the name comes from the dilated pupils (observed as large black eyes) that are one of the side-effects of mild Belladonna poisoning, though this attribution is disputed.

⁶⁷ German: *eingepft*

⁶⁸ Inflation was rampant in post-WWI Central Europe (Germany, Austria, etc.) as a result of war reparations imposed by the Allied powers. This impoverished the former middle class, and gave rise to extremist movements. Steiner is commenting on the economic impact to doctors when the average person could no longer afford health care.

⁶⁹ German: *immunisiert*

⁷⁰ Steiner would direct you to his book, *The Philosophy of Freedom*, where he elaborates an ethics of individual action guided ultimately by structured intuition.

VACCINATION

IN THE WORK OF

RUDOLF STEINER

Selected, Edited, and Translated by
Daniel Hindes



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