

THE PANDEMIC OF FEAR... (AND THE MEDICINE OF LOVE)

The real pandemic today is fear. And the specific force - or 'virus' - which most of all impels it, is fear of illness and death. This is a modern problem, which has its roots in our compulsion to see the whole of existence - including the human being - from a completely materialistic point of view. Alongside the truly dazzling light of modern scientific achievement over the past few centuries, we are staring now directly into its shadow.¹

The great 19th century German professor, philosopher, composer and artist of the word, Friedrich Nietzsche, is one of the few thinkers who has had the cognitive acumen and courage to follow this materialistic mind-frame right through to its logical conclusion - a world with neither meaning nor morality - and it brought him to a complete mental breakdown. Few people have the courage to do that today, but that does not stop this paradigm from deeply influencing our mental, emotional, social and physical health.²

Another great soul, from the 20th century, Dr Viktor Frankl - one of the very few who not only survived Auschwitz, but emerged from it inwardly stronger than he was before - wrote about the power of discovering meaning in life, in a book which has sold over twelve million copies. Within that situation of uttermost degradation of life's meaning, created out of hatred, illness and death, what was Frankl astonishingly able to do, which Nietzsche, in his more 'normal' life, was not? He made a change inside himself out of his own free will! Within that terrifying existential void, created by modern materialism at its lowest depths, he created a meaningful existence, moment by moment, detail by tiniest detail.³

Waldorf education has come into this world - and I say this humbly, knowing well how hard it is - to change fear into love, thereby helping children, later in life, have resilience against all kinds of weakening impulses in our modern times. The power which enables teachers to bring this medicine is the picture of the human being in body, soul *and* spirit, given by anthroposophical spiritual science, inaugurated by Rudolf Steiner, whose life overlapped both Nietzsche and Frankl. But it has to be authentic to each teacher and enlivened daily through reflecting on one's experiences, both terrible and wonderful.⁴

In the English language, the words 'wholesome' and 'healthy' are similar in meaning. Healing is a process of becoming 'whole' again, of re-integrating what has become separated off and dysfunctional. And of uniting the more earthly levels of one's being with those higher faculties which are ever-capable of further development.

The anthroposophical picture of what a human being is and can become connects us with the whole of evolution and the whole cosmos, as microcosm within the macrocosm. One can find in it a natural resonance with many ancient cultures, which placed the human being on the middle ground between heaven and earth. But it includes far greater depth and detail, because it was born out of the fully conscious methodology of modern scientific practice - without restricting itself, however, only to materialistic interpretations. Like every other aspect of science, it needs to be continuously elaborated, as humanity evolves.

This living, scientific, artistic, human-centred picture of reality has the power to bring healing, by enabling us to recognise our wholeness. It also highlights the challenge of self-initiated moral development, and, as Frankl eloquently demonstrated, the healing power of the meaning we bring into our lives, especially in the face of suffering, loss and death. History is rich in stories of people's courage in such times and my experience is that

children and young people breathe them in deeply, thereby strengthening their own health and inner commitment to life. Within this context, illness takes on a different appearance. As the grit in the oyster becomes a pearl, so can adversity awaken new forces within.

The Power of our Thoughts, Feelings and Inner Pictures

In another best-selling book from the last century, *The Brain That Changes Itself*, we encounter story after story of this process of self-healing, alone and with the resolute support of others. But I ask you: Is it really the brain that changes itself, as new neuronal pathways form within it? Or is it the intangible will of the human beings involved, their steadfastness and love, along with the physical and mental exercises which the patient undertakes each day - is it not *this* that brings new life to the brain?⁵

Those who have lived with and perhaps overcome illnesses can testify to the reality of this non-material power in the human soul. Such people also have much to offer to others. But so long as fear rules over love - and over courage and will and unshakable faith - one's inner forces waste away. Through contemplating this reality, one can recognise the power that the pictures in our minds and hearts have, to influence our health for better or worse. And this gives one more possibility, as a teacher, to help children and adolescents develop health-bringing inner pictures themselves, as foundations for a very different future.

Let us place this next to the mental images which are being reinforced most strongly right now, through each day's news around the world, based on the idea that the 'experts' know much more about our bodies and souls than we do. Instead of being encouraged to take responsibility for our own inner strengthening and caring for others, we are being required to submit to a single interpretation of this illness and, ultimately, a single remedy for it.

What is at the basis of this? Fundamentally, the picture of illness as a 'thing'! We are living in a world that is not only fear-filled but fragmented into bits, into machine-like component parts, into 'things'. Even a virus, though unimaginably small, is portrayed pictorially as a kind of giant spider-like, weapon-like, almost metallic, brightly-coloured 'thing' on our screens and in our news. If I were still a child, I would have nightmares about that 'thing' and I have no doubt that very many children are doing just that.

Is this helping us become more healthy? I think not. But there is more. As, in war, one 'weapon-thing' is used to eradicate another 'weapon-thing', so now, in medicine, a 'thing' composed of a concoction of unspecified chemicals and substances, which we call a vaccine, is being prepared as the ultimate weapon to wipe out the virus-thing that is currently occupying the territory of our body cells and minds.⁶

Please do not take these words as a criticism of the *idea* of vaccination. As a concept, it is brilliant, one could even say, organic, for the principle behind it is to inject into the blood stream a trace of the illness itself, so as to arouse the body's natural defence processes. This is actually in line with what this article is all about. But, as Chinese wisdom knows so intimately well, everything depends on the 'Way' (the *Tao*) through which we do things. What, one might ask, is the Tao of healthy vaccination?

For a start, in this age of clear-minded, individualised consciousness, one needs to know with confidence exactly *what* is being injected into one's bloodstream and *how* it was created - and the answers to these basic questions are very far from clear at this time. Are we also permitted to ask *why* this tactic, and this alone, is the answer to our shared world

crisis? Behind these, too, there may lurk the more shadowy question of one's trust in the integrity of the people enforcing this remedy on us: the question of *who?* And *where?*

And what about other ways of encouraging the body's resistance - ways which, in today's one-way-fits-all mentality, are being put down as 'disinformation' and 'pseudo-science'? Oh dear! Where now is the eternal spirit of enquiry which is so fundamental to what it means to be a human being? Where is the *art* of healing, the *art* of leading a healthy life in a thoroughly challenging time of human history?

Let us bear in mind, too, that all of this is taking place within bodies and minds which have already become weakened through pollution, radiation, stress and separation from nature over several generations - and also through absorbing, whether consciously or subliminally, the prevailing world picture of the human being as a biological machine. Like any other 'thing', a machine has no meaning or identity in itself. And it certainly cannot heal itself. It simply exists as something separate from every other 'thing'.

This is the price we pay for putting so many of our scientific eggs in the one basket of materialism and excluding the many other baskets of so-called 'alternative' research, based on a holistic scientific paradigm of reality. We have an incredibly detailed science of parts, but, to our peril, are losing contact with the whole. In that sense, we are living in an atmosphere of permanent illness, of meaningless separation. And this mechanistic picture brings up *fear from the very depths of our being*. The irony is that fear has a way of bringing about the very thing towards which it is directed!

Our Culture of Things and its Consequences

Significantly, the centre-piece of the so-called 'fourth revolution', which is being rushed towards us at phenomenal speed, is the idea of an 'Internet of Things.' Is not our world already suffocating under an excess of things - a world in which even birth, childhood, ageing, life itself and death - not to mention, joy and pain in body, soul and spirit - are being seen only as chemicals, electro-magnetic energy or neurones, to be stimulated or suppressed? Can we not pause and contemplate what we are destroying through this compulsive thing-thinking? And how much we are gaining in the quality of our lives??

A health-bringing education is unavoidably holistic and it is a *process*, not simply a juxtaposition of bits (marks, subjects, grades, skills, separate experiences and so on). It is a 'Tao' of growing and becoming, and the more integrated and meaningful it is, the healthier its effect. That does not mean it is just about pleasure. Hopefully, we all do feel pleasure in learning and growing, but pain and sometimes very great difficulties are an essential part of the process, too. What matters is life, in all its sanctity and rich diversity, and the human being and all other beings within that life. And for life to be experienced in abundance, there must also be death.

Within the increasingly dense web of electro-magnetic radiation from satellites and power grids, more and more children are being *born* with fear. It is the root of a progeny of problems - behavioural, social, allergy-related, emotional, psychological and physical. Adolescence, too, is increasingly being seen as a fearful problem, even an illness, that has to be 'fixed' - instead of a process of unbelievable self-transformation on all levels. Fear incapacitates. Love makes all things possible, makes all things whole.

Instead of wondering when we will be able to go back to how the world was just a few months ago, is it not more sensible to recognise that it was precisely through that way of

living (and dying) – and the mindset that determined it all – that this pandemic was born? Whatever its direct sources, COVID-19 belongs to the world that we human beings have been creating over the past centuries. And it has come to a head.

What is in front of us now is the consequence of our way of thinking and living. It is a mirror image of ourselves as modern humanity, and it is not a pretty picture. But it is precisely this confrontation with one's own shadow, which gives one the jolt to bring true change. *Is this the way I wish to live my life? Is this the way of the human being? What is the human being?* These are the kinds of questions that demand to be faced.

From what I perceive through my own communications and research, many people are experiencing this. Precisely now, in this time of introspection, a new reality is being born out of recognising the power that thoughts have to overcome spatial and even temporal distances, and the power that hearts have to hold an unlimited number of human or other beings within their healing sphere - no matter the differences between people and whether they are on this earth right now or in the spiritual world. Within and behind and beyond the spectres of a humanity in fear and moral uncertainty, there stands a towering picture of human possibility. But it will become reality only through our making it so.

What is behind this? Is it not the birthing of a new level of love, created out of one's own free will? No longer a love that belongs only to the selfish levels of our being but one that is elevated into the light of pure, conscious intention, within our troubled and dangerous times. Love as a practical force that brings healing, through connecting with the wholeness of one's own being. And of the vast, *all-encompassing* Being of Humanity.

Ben Cherry

1. I venture to say, it could not have existed in this way a thousand years ago, because people's relationship with life and death was extremely different from how it is now. Likewise, their picture of illness and health. I am not suggesting they had no fear, but that the specific fear of the extinction of one's own 'I' for all eternity is something that has been born out of the modern heightening of 'I' consciousness, coupled with the general lack of any concept of a spiritual realm of being, whether here or in a 'world beyond'.

2. Friedrich Nietzsche 1844-1900, a deeply spiritual and highly talented man, who is perhaps most widely known for his statement that God is dead.

3. Viktor Frankl 1905-1997, medical doctor and psychologist, author of many books and articles, including *Man's Search for Meaning*, published by Random House, London.

4. Rudolf Steiner 1861-1925, founder of Anthroposophical Spiritual Science and its many practical offshoots, including Waldorf education, anthroposophical medicine, bio-dynamic farming and much more. Possibly the most prolific writer, speaker, teacher, artist and practical man of action of all time.

5. *The Brain that Changes Itself* by Norman Doidge MD, published by Penguin Books, NY 2007

6. I know my words may sound harsh to many readers, but this situation is also having an extremely harsh effect on the lives and livelihoods of millions of human beings. Sometimes life wakes us up in abrupt ways, and that is what the future is bringing towards us with great speed right now: a harsh awakening!

7. See, as an example, the widely read books of Y.N. Harari. Here is a person of outstanding intellect, fully in touch with modern issues and able to question everything *except* the materialistic preconceptions of Darwinism and our contemporary scientific paradigm. What is it that blocks us from recognising the *difference between fact and theory* in modern science? Is it a direct legacy of our own education?