

ALCHEMY: A MODERN VIEW**SEAN FERRIS*****The great work in a Consumerist Society***

Alchemy has all but disappeared, but some of the great scientists were practitioners, including Sir Isaac Newton and Robert Boyle. It had a complex number of goals but two core aspirations were constant. The exoteric search for the Philosopher's stone – a substance which could transform Lead into Gold and the esoteric, the discovery of a panacea which brings about longevity, immortality and ultimately redemption. Like Newton before me, I am a dowser, my expertise though is in human health and several years ago, after looking at the accepted roles of elements in the body, I dived into the periodic table. A surprising pattern emerged that made me look at Alchemy with renewed interest.

Whilst looking at clients with a gluten allergy, I began to see that they had high levels of copper not only in their intestines but also in the right side of their brains. In order to understand more I dowsed through the elements and found that the precious metal Palladium was being absorbed poorly in the same area. Palladium though known to be present in the body, as most of the elements are, is only found in parts per million and therefore thought to have no biological role. It was however used as a treatment for Tuberculosis before antibiotics. This information chimed with something I had already realised – all those with a gluten allergy had a predominant Tubercular miasm.

Samuel Hahnemann (1755-1843) the founder of homeopathy initiated the idea of the miasm. Although he cured many patients, he found that they might return with ailments that may have moved site, as in the case of a skin rash, or with altered symptoms, someone cured of arthritis for instance returned with headaches. He surmised that a shadow or miasm generated by an ancestor contracting certain diseases left its mark on his patients (by what might be called genetic inheritance). Tuberculosis was one such disease, Leprosy, Gonorrhoea and Syphilis comprise the others.

Since a possible link between a precious metal and the miasms had presented itself, the next step was to dowse those people with the other miasms. A very obvious pattern soon emerged, those with the leprosy or psoric miasm were low in Lithium (which is not a precious metal but has fascinating properties) and were high in Strontium; the gonorrhoea or sycotic miasm gave rise to low Platinum and high tungsten. The Syphilitic miasm was however the most revealing, since in every case there was a lack of gold and an excess lead. This of course was the first hint of Alchemy and spoke of one of its primary goals, Chrysopoeia, the transformation of a base metal into gold, albeit reversed. Of course what I felt was happening was not a transformation but a replacement. These relationships I had uncovered between base and precious metals begged some questions. Was the body the crucible for the 'transmutation' of lead into gold which in fact leads to internal health not external wealth? While the base metals, copper, tungsten, strontium and lead will all oxidise drawing oxygen out of the organs and blood, the precious metals do not. They are immortal and untarnishing. So it may follow that if the miasms are responsible for all chronic diseases as Hahneman believed, it may be that the precious metals even in minute amounts have some part to play in restoring health and as I will try and show, this may be a broader idea than just physical or human wellbeing.

Through a glass darkly

Before examining what role precious metals might play in the body, it is worth talking about what a holistic, or truly effective system of health might look like. In my experience it should be a clarifying of the relationship between the inner world of a person and the outer world of nature. The healer acts as an intermediary enabling this clarification. True healing happens on the subtlest level as when a homeopath for instance matches the memory of a plant, mineral or even disease to someone's need so that they achieve their own healing, the body and soul understands its own lack and remedies it. This is why it is said that the sage is the greatest healer since he or she perceives the listener's need and very simply weaves the story that brings enlightenment and balance. Instead of an out there and in here model that this would imply, I would like to introduce the idea that it is more like the polishing of a mirror so that the self is reflected back to one clearly. This calls for a much broader idea of the self.

With this in mind it may be seen that all disease, addictions and similar self-harm are part of a distorted view of the self which attempts to reach out to fill a lack and heal itself but due to the distortion reaches out excessively or misguidedly. All disease could therefore be seen as a form of pica.

(Pica is the persistent craving and compulsive eating of non-food substances). As when a pregnant woman eats coal for carbon. The pica, when it comes to the precious metals I suggest, is both monstrous and subtle. In order to clarify our sometimes very ancient relationship to them it requires using that most powerful and subtle of methods - story, especially etymology and mythology.

Cities of Gold

Aurum, as Gold is known in Latin, comes from the ancient Roman word 'Aurora' which is the morning glow or the light of the dawn. What I take this to mean is probably what it's always meant on a poetic level, the return of the sun, the light and ultimately, for hope.

Lead can be summed up in such phrases 'as heavy as lead' or 'leaden-hearted', the definition of which is destitute of feeling. Plumbum is its Latin name and of course plumbing the depths is associated with reaching a low point. If gold is associated with the undying light of the sun and looking to the heavens, lead is the nadir of that state, a plunge into the murky oceans, devoid of light. It represents a state of hopelessness or despair. This state of hopelessness is exactly what gold is used to treat in homeopathy. Aurum is a remedy for depressive people and for those likely to commit suicide. Devoid of hope, the dawn for these people never comes. Those with a syphilitic miasm are prone to addiction. This can run through families and be a generational search for answers in the depths of a glass.

And so to Syphilis, that terrible disease - does it have a connection to Gold, the Sun and to Hopelessness? Again story, myth and etymology clears the shifting miasm that veils its deeper story.

In 1495 Naples' citizens succumbed to a disease that ravaged their skin, disfigured their features and ate them down to the bone. German humanist Joseph Grunpeck later wrote that the sickness was "So cruel, so distressing, so appalling that until now nothing more terrible or disgusting has ever been known on this earth." The most supported theory about Syphilis' introduction to Italy is that it came back with Columbus' sailors from 'over the ocean blue'. This would mean that fellow passenger Syphilis travelled alongside news of the New World's discovery. If my theory is correct, then as the Mayans, Aztecs and particularly the Incas were being robbed of their Gold on a grand scale, and Syphilis was stripping the Gold from European bodies on an equally grand scale.

And Syphilis, why that name? In 1530, the name was first used by Italian physician and poet Girolamo Fracastoro as the title of a poem describing the ravages of the disease in Italy. It was written as a myth centred around the eponymous shepherd boy who instead of sacrificing to Apollo begins to look to humans for guidance. The Sun god punishes the boy with the symptoms of the disease. This naming is an extraordinary coincidence since this disease which robs gold from the body is brought from the continent that used that metal to worship its Sun Gods. Many of these civilisations had the sun as its major deity. Gold, seen by the Aztecs as the sweat of the sun, was removed from the sun god's temples as the sweat of syphilis formed on European temples.

In time, we tamed this deadly beast that stampeded through Europe. However it is a recent victory, as it was the advent of antibiotics which has insulated us from the fear it engendered for 500 years. But its legacy goes marching on in the bodies of all those with the miasm.

Gold, hope, lead, hopelessness, the sun and syphilis, a grouping of elements, emotions, a disease and a celestial body that when written seem to defy connection. The connections also seem to defy causality and throw up more questions than they answer. Does a loss of hope lead to the disease? Is the disease a punishment from an angry god? How does gold connect to the Sun? Clarifying these connections required me to look for a simple but elegant answer. Only one presented itself, one that Newton might have approved of, the classical, alchemical element of Fire. The fire of the sun, the fiery colour of gold, the burning nature of the disease and fire's absence in the darkness of the depths. The classical Elements (capitalised from now on) though dismissed as childish in a post Descartes world, may actually be the lens through which such diverse connections can be spoken of. Poetic, visceral and Universal all at once. It also promotes a viewpoint which lifts us out of judgement since an imbalance of Fire may well be something that occurs on a planet-wide scale not just to one individual, nation or even continent.

Yet each man kills the thing he loves

Oscar Wilde

To further illuminate this Elemental view, it is worth exploring Tuberculosis to see if the interweaving patterns repeat with this disease. Etymologically, Palladium is named after the asteroid Pallas and the asteroid is

named after Pallas Athena, the Greek goddess of wisdom. Copper, the base metal for Palladium, is named after the Greek island of Cyprus. So far no association but if one digs deeper, the parallels become more obvious.

Athena took the epithet Pallas from her closest friend whom she accidentally killed during sparring. She took the name of her friend as her own and was known subsequently as Pallas Athena. The island of Cyprus is named after the tree which in turn is named after a youth called Cypriassus who was given a deer as a gift from the besotted God Apollo. Cypriassus, inconsolable after accidentally killing his beloved deer, told Apollo that he wished to weep for ever. Apollo reluctantly turned the boy into the Cypress tree, whose sap resembles flowing tears.

How do these parallel stories of self-induced loss relate to tuberculosis? One of the main symptoms of tuberculosis is pleural effusion, a filling of water in the membranes of the lung and the other is what gives it its other name consumption. The sufferer literally drowns in his own water and wastes away or is consumed. This describes Cypriassus' state. He is filled with tears and consumed with grief. If gold represents Hope due to its name then in what way may Palladium represent Wisdom? The Tubercular miasm's state is one of restlessness, however it is something that emerges out of a feeling of isolation or more correctly grief, feeling left behind or separate, wisdom may in this case be seen as being the opposite of this state. An understanding that we are never truly separate. Athena herself embodied a memorial to her friend and so found a way to deal with tragedy and loss. The Elemental principle that ties Palladium, Copper, Wisdom, Isolation and Tuberculosis together is of course Water, the Element that leaks from us as we wish to make contact with the thing we have lost.

Retail Therapy or As Within so Without

It is one thing to identify Alchemy as something that emerges through looking at human disease but for it to be useful and relevant it must say something about the modern world too. To many of us these diseases, leprosy to tuberculosis, seem confined to a bygone age as antibiotics have largely consigned them to being shadows of the killers they once were. In the 1930's, Syphilis was still killing 60,000 people per year in the US alone. In 1815, one in four of the population of Britain was killed by consumption. In 1999, 33 people died of syphilis in the US and in the UK, in the same year, 393 died from TB. In what way then can Alchemy and an understanding of the principle Elements be relevant to the way we are living now that seems so out of balance with our world?

Let us look more closely at the most prevalent miasm of these times, Tuberculosis and in particular at its older more descriptive name Consumption. This comes from the Latin Consumere "to use up, eat, waste," emere means "to buy, take". So consumption in terms of the disease is to be eaten or used up and waste away, but if this internal experience is turned around and expressed outwardly it is to consume, eat up, to buy and to waste.

This is where a picture of holistic health with Alchemy at its heart becomes a radical notion. It poses the question that what if this consumerist, diseased behaviour we are in the midst of is the result of a monstrous and subtle Pica, with a distorted view of what our needs are at its heart? Since the majority of us are affected by this miasm, it would mean that any organisation, business or government would share this distorted view and therefore exhibit short-term or addictive behaviour.

In order to explain why this might be, I shall pose another question; what if the symptoms of this disease are to be expected? It is said that childhood diseases are there to stand as markers in a child's development – what if we, humanity, are passing through a particular phase, a Tubercular phase, a phase of Water or more commonly as these things are expressed a Palladium age? An age where the imbalance within us is reflected out there in our acquisitive, destructive and wasteful urges. Where water is rising, ice caps are melting, rainfall changes are key, water is the new Gold and our own sense of collective grief at the state of the Earth we love is so deep. Cypriassus' deer could well stand in for the gift we have been given and yet through our own wayward actions, are destroying.

Defining our collective disease, or era in this case, is often the beginning of a way through. The beginning of a light at the end of the tunnel or the light of the dawn. It does seem that a way of defining our particular time frame has been lost and with it some perspective. We can call it the modern era but this tells us nothing, now is always the modern era. If this diagnosis is correct then it would need to be contextualised by defining what ages precede this one.

To do this I shall turn to those wonderfully simple and clarifying principal Elements and especially the order that they are commonly written in. Earth, Air, Fire and Water. This correlates with the order the miasms are given in Ian Watson's book - *The Homeopathic Miasms - A Modern View*.

The Earth or Stone Age: Ian Watson looks at the psoric miasm as though it were the 'first challenge to humanity', its expression is in terms of survival, temperature fluctuations, thirst, hunger. It is a body at war with itself and like all the miasms it embodies a dichotomy, in this case, War and Peace. Lithium is the metal for the Psoric miasm, this comes from litho meaning stone. It is a time when humanity dwelt in caves and used just the body or an animal for power and transport. The tribe or neighbouring tribes would have been all that was known.

The Platinum Age: The Sycotic miasm I relate directly to Air. There is no handy etymology to fall back on. Platinum means little silver but the diseased state is very forthcoming. These people find it very difficult to speak out. Tungsten, meaning heavy metal, sits on the lungs when it is in excess and these people can feel a great deal of shame which halts their expression. This shows the dichotomy it embodies; Beauty and Shame. The Platinum age would be a time when the power our ancestors used came from wind for sails and mills. It was a time when travel would take place between other nations or states.

The Golden Age: Whose disease is Syphilis, could still be seen to be ongoing since it is concerned with Fire. Its power is combustible from coal, oil and gas. Other continents become easily within reach.

The Tubercular or Palladium Age: Is very much now. It is concerned with Water and its power is electricity, the power of lightning, hydroelectric. Electricity enables global, near instantaneous communication.

The pattern shows an expanding consciousness of the world we inhabit and increasing globalisation. The power harnessed in each era increases greatly, almost exponentially through each age. Of course there are overlaps as with oil and electricity being easy bedfellows and as there is when the miasms are expressed in the human body and psyche.

In the interests of getting a holistic view, another template may be applied with the question, what if each age not only represented a time span in humanities' life but also stood for periods in an individual's lifespan. Through dowsing I set these ages at 7 years, except the first, Lithium again is a special case. The cave-like womb represents the age of Earth. The age of air, includes the beginning of speech and its infancy up to 7. The first kindling of desires and wants of childhood is Fire and takes us up to 14. Water represents the teenage years awash on a sea of emotion, able to travel further out into the world, with more power but a certain lack of equilibrium. Changing perspective again this time from individual to humanity would mean this Platinum age is humanities' teenage consumerist, irresponsible years. If this is so what does adulthood and maturity look and feel like on planet Earth?

The Fifth Age

The pattern set up by uncovering an alchemical way of looking at our past and present eras might appear to be problematic when it comes to looking to the future since many might think there are only four Elements.

Fortunately there is a fifth Element, a fifth miasm and a fifth precious metal to complete the pattern.

Uncovering their stories brings us to gems that have lain within our reach but remained hidden behind subtle confusion, fear and illusion. This view in no way represents any conspiracy theory on my part or any belief in wilful suppression. It is something more subtle and I hope more interesting. It is these gems that will show the true worth of a modern Alchemy, a way to illuminate a way out of our diseased state.

I see clients with the Fifth miasm and dowse for their absorption of precious metals. Although one of the first four miasms will still be showing in the right parietal lobe they all show a deficiency of a precious metal on the left side of the brain as well. This pattern is of Carcinosis or Cancer. This disease, unlike the much tamed beasts of Leprosy, Gonorrhoea, Syphilis and Tuberculosis still strikes fear into the heart. Last year in the UK a third of all deaths were due to it. If the fifth miasm and age is related to Cancer, we are well and truly beginning to grow up. And what is the age we are moving into? It is the Silver Age.

Silver is an exceptional metal. It is the most electrically and thermally conductive metal known in the universe and has been shown to have extraordinary healing capabilities. For instance, shattered bones which fail to heal with other methods will mend when silver electrodes are used on either side of the break.

The relationship between Silver and its base metal can be seen to be at the heart of a fundamental story for many on planet earth. Silver in Latin is Argentum which comes from the Greek root Arg- which means white or shining. Silver is the white, shining metal - Nickel is its base metal. Nickel's name comes from Germanic miners who consistently mistook Nickel for Copper and therefore named it after a goblin, a mischievous sprite or demon in their folklore, Nick. In Britain this becomes something more sinister since we have our own version 'Old Nick' aka the Devil.

The Devil has many other names - Lucifer and Satan being the most common. It is worth looking at their etymology which is a confusing read. Satan is a Hebrew word meaning "one who opposes, obstructs", Satan in Greek is diabolos (the Devil) which means "slanderer - literally one who throws something across the path of another." Lucifer is Latin for carrier of light. Why are these definitions confusing? They appear to have nothing to do with the meaning we give them today. Lucifer seems to have been the name attributed to the King of Babylon and Satan was not used originally to denote any individual entity.

"The Hebrew term Satan, describes an adversarial role. It is not the name of a particular character. Although Hebrew storytellers as early as the sixth century B.C.E. occasionally introduced a supernatural character whom they called Satan, what they meant was any one of the angels sent by God for the specific purpose of blocking or obstructing human activity. [Elaine Pagels, "The Origin of Satan," 1995]"

A pattern emerges when it comes to the naming of Nickel, but with the origins of the devil, things become cloudy and obscured. This is compounded when I throw in the fact that until very recently, I mistakenly thought the metal that opposed Silver was Iridium. I will therefore attribute Nickel with not a story of evil but perhaps its original Germanic and Hebrew meaning of a mischievous or even divine obstruction or illusion. Silver by contrast, may be seen to be the most clarifying element. It is the most reflective of all elements with the ability to hold the memory of an image hence its use in mirrors and photography – 'the photograph never lies'. Silver and Nickel; white and shining to mischievous and illusory – the dichotomy they represent I believe is summed up in Enlightenment and Illusion.

How does this relationship relate to cancer? It could be summed up in two words: 'know thyself'. Ian Watson writes, 'A major theme that is relevant to the cancer miasm is the journey towards individuation. Carl Jung coined the term 'individuation' to describe the process of becoming a whole human being, a whole person in your own right and living your own life to its fullest expression.' If one relates this to the lesson of silver and the holistic model of health it is to see oneself reflected in the clear mirror of the self as one truly is not confused by others' fears or the majority view or the illusion that Nickel is strangely associated with. In essence this means, I believe, that we must find what we are here to do, our purpose. It is for me the essence of graduating to adulthood on planet Earth. 'As we progress through adolescence, there is a healthy throwing-off of the authority and expectations of those around us which is essential if are to find our true individual path in life.' To uncover ones purpose and to find fulfilment, theoretically frees us from the need for control over others. This is reflected in the inner tyranny of the disease which invades and takes over healthy tissue. Maturity on earth then looks very much like freedom from slavery, oppression and control and I mean that in the widest sense including all beings and the environment.

So what is the Fifth Element, what do we get when we are given the keys to the shiny new car on our 21st? Aether - the Quintessence, the all-encompassing, omnipresent substance that infuses all things. In classical Greek thought, it was the pure fresh air or clear sky, the pure essence that the gods breathed. I am no physicist but since uncovering this Alchemical pattern of precious metals and disease it has deposited me blinking at the doorstep of a debate that has been ongoing for well over a century. Aether was accepted as a scientific theory until the late 19th century as a medium which carried light and for Newton was integral to his early ideas on Gravity. It was a substance that filled the vacuum of space, a medium through which all things passed and had their being. It was a theory that seemed to die with Einstein's theory of Relativity, and several experiments that seemed to refute its existence. Einstein's and Newton's more mechanistic theories seemed to be enough to explain the action of gravity and light and yet there are anomalies that will not go away. Gravity still remains a very mysterious force since quantum gravity and general relativity do not marry up, dark matter and energy seems to be everywhere without being observable. There are many out there who are clamouring for a return to an Aether- based science.

I shall not fully throw myself into the debate here and will simply outline what is speculated to be possible if Aether itself is understood and harnessed. But I will say that if we are to wrest ourselves free from the grip of purely mechanistic science, an Aether-based science may be our best hope. A connecting force pervading all

things would make sense of many phenomena including dowsing and homeopathy and may well be the definition of Holism. The power of the Silver Age may be the most controversial aspect to Aether since it inevitably points towards Free energy and Anti-gravity, the holy grails of sidelined and ridiculed cranks and charlatans. However we may not wish to be so quick to judge since we should remember we are looking through the distorted lens of the miasms and the pica fuelled addiction to oil and electricity that accompany them. Fixing these lenses would mean changing our story drastically. We may have to give up tyranny, misogyny, illness, and both killing our planet and grieving for it along with a whole host of other stories. An Aether-based science might fill the gaps in sense that have been created by relying solely on causality and mechanistic science. It would in short put back meaning, art and holism into the story we tell ourselves about ourselves and our world. If however the power used in each successive age does multiply exponentially, controlling the primal force of Aether would require us to be enlightened, responsible adults free from the taints of War, Shame, Despair and Grief, with the ability to see ourselves clearly in the mirror of the Silver Age.

References

Watson, Ian (2009) *The Homeopathic Miasms: A Modern View*, Cutting Edge Publications.
 Online Etymology Dictionary, www.etymonline.com
 Wikipedia, en.wikipedia.org

Sean Ferris studied Performance Writing at Dartington College and Environmental Philosophy and Goethean Science at Lancaster University. He is a pioneering medical dowser (having trained with Jack Temple). He teaches and works out of Totnes in Devon.

