

Anthroposophical medicine

The experiences of Robert Smith Hald [<http://www.waldorfcritics.org/articles/Smith-Hald.html>] at the [Camphill Special School and community at Beaver Run](#), Glenmoore, USA and that of Sharon Lombard and her daughter at Pleasant Ridge Waldorf School , Wisconsin, USA [<http://pleasantridgewaldorf.org/>] are an indication of the dangers of applying anthroposophical medical practices based on the occult ideas of Rudolf Steiner and anthroposophy.

Sharon Lombard's traumatic experience led her to engage in [detailed research](#) about many aspects of anthroposophy and I recommend that anyone who might be tempted to place their child in a Waldorf Steiner School or approach an anthroposophical, homeopathic or Chinese Buddhist doctor for treatment of a serious ailment, read this first. When I looked at the web site of the Pleasant Ridge School in March 2013 I could see no mention of Steiner's occult ideas and this confirmed for me the deception that Sharon Lombard experienced from the school. The public rhetoric was far removed from the reality and this is sadly true of the public image conveyed by many Steiner Waldorf schools. The school at Beaver Run, is, however more honest about its spiritual anthroposophic underpinnings.

According to Steiner "A human being must develop formic acid within if such a person wants to generate the soul element from the basic level of life processes that exist in the lower body, where oxalic acid plays a very important role. Then the soul's element lives in the formic acid of the breath and rises to the head, where it can continue to function and become effective. The soul's element needs this process that converts oxalic acid into formic acid within the human being". According to the [Anthromed Library](#) Steiner's view was that "The final step in this metamorphosis of matter, the conversion of oxalic acid into formic acid, releasing carbon dioxide which is then exhaled, is, according to him, the necessary basis for astral body activity in this organism". However, the article later goes on to admit that Steiner was wrong "If we simply repeat the statements Steiner made in the 1920s today we are clearly going against established knowledge in the field of physiology, which obviously would not have been Steiner's intention". Whether or not this was his intention I will leave the reader to speculate. The anthroposophic practitioner who treated Sharon Lombard's daughter was attempting to heal her spiritual bodies. By rubbing Oxalis cream on her abdomen she would develop formic acid within and have life. "Its the formic acid that attracts and mobilizes soul and spirit, otherwise the spirit will go away". She was also prescribed Aurum (Gold) cream which according to anthroposophists would help the suicidal. The timing of the application and the manner in which it was applied was also ascribed with a spiritual meaning - "Aurum (gold/sun) cream should be applied in the shape of a flame over my sick child's heart at bedtime - sundown, when the Christ heals and casts out demons". The Chinese Buddhist monk whom she was advised to consult suggested that "my husbands mother's spirit might have entered our daughter wanting attention". His advice was to "place photographs of his deceased mother around the house and speak about his mother to our child".

Sharon Lombard believed that Steiner was drawing on ancient medical practices - "Steiner appears to have based his medicine on Hermetic ideas dating back to the 1600s and before. Evidently, Rosicrucion doctors spread their occult truths to the people at large". She quotes from Geoffrey Ahern's book about Anthroposophy. "Steiner accepted an alchemical synthesis stemming from a blend of Gnostic Alexandrian and Aristolian thought, Egyptian technology and Mesopotamian astrology. Steiner believed that gold corresponds with the sun, silver with the moon, copper with Venus, lead with Saturn, iron with Mars, tin with Jupiter and quicksilver with Mercury. This thinking was magical:macrocosmic astrological influences were all important" (Ahern, 1984, p.149). Unsurprisingly, none of the treatments the girl received improved her health and she was eventually taken to conventional doctors for treatment, as a result of which she recovered. Sharon and her husband also moved their daughter to a conventional state school where she had a positive experience despite being behind in her educational development. In the conclusion to the article, Sharon Lombard states:

"Discovering Waldorf's subtext forced me to confront my own reality and reaffirm my perspective on life. Knowledge of Anthroposophy enabled me to put Waldorf into context and to recognise its omnipresence in my daughter's lesson books. By reading Steiner, I gained an understanding of our experiences as well as the words with which to speak about them. I came to know that as an infidel, Anthroposophy is incompatible

with my perception of reality, and, as an artist, it conflicts with my vision of art. Steiner's racist doctrine coincides with my experience of Apartheid - the reason I left my native South Africa."

Robert Smith-Hald's health improved only after he was diagnosed by a conventional doctor of having an intolerance to wheat. However he did not initially act on this knowledge because he had been conditioned in Camphill communities to have a fear of conventional treatments.

One aspect I gained from both these experiences was the difficulty they both had in breaking away from the environments which had caused so much pain and distress. How many more victims are out there I wonder?

Steiner imbued certain dance-like movements which he named eurythmy and the anthroposophical art he outlined, with occult spiritual healing properties. Both are an aspect of Steiner Waldorf education. Steiner's cosmic dance would connect the pupil to the spiritual world because it was a channel through which the spirit would reveal itself to the human consciousness. "A central goal of this practice is to find a living relationship to the starry heavens, especially to the spiritual realm of the signs of the zodiac" (Powell and Worberg, 2002, p.32). According to the Eurythmy Association of America "Eurythmy can contribute greatly to the spiritual life of Waldorf schools. Of all the arts, eurythmy is an anthroposophical art and has the greatest potential for transformation. Eurythmy is also a social art and has the ability to enliven and harmonise the life forces. It is helpful to set aside time for eurythmy before meetings of teachers, parents and the board for instance. Faculty and children can do eurythmy at school assemblies. Public courses might be offered during main lesson time or evenings. The experience of festival offerings can be deepened with the inclusion of eurythmy works..." (Friedman, 1998/99, first draft of guidelines - retrieved March 3rd, 2003). Eurythmy is a testament to the sectarian nature of Steiner Waldorf schools. The above statement also suggests that eurythmy can have healing properties and extend life. Are professional eurythmists healthier and do they live longer than non-eurythmists? A study of 211 anthroposophists, 106 of which were eurythmists suggests that quite the reverse is the case, although the size of the sample may throw some doubts on the results. The study found that non-eurythmists lived an average age of 80.58 years and eurythmists lived an average of 73.92 years. (Poplawski 2003). However it would appear that some eurythmists accept the findings and suggest that they donate some of their own strength. [How noble of them!!]. Another suggestion from retired Waldorf teacher Hans Valentien says this could happen because eurythmists engage "their own life forces to a much greater degree than is normal" and eventually this disarray "can lead to cancer".

What is Anthroposophic Medicine?

A publication *Anthroposophic Medicines* [<http://www.medsektion-goetheanum.org/en/>] by the Medical Section of the School of Spiritual Science, Dornach, Switzerland, opens with the words "All anthroposophic medicines are designed to stimulate the patient's powers of self healing" and ends with the words "The emphasis is on restoring the balance of bodily functions and strengthening the immune system. The right medicines play a major role in this process".

Materials of vegetable, animal, mineral and metal origin are used in these medicines. Many of the procedures and preparations are similar in many respects to Homeopathy and the difference between homeopathy and conventional medicine is described as follows - "Both terms are derived from the Greek: homoios = similar, allos = different, pathos = disease. Homeopathy seeks to heal "like with like". For each patient, the doctor must find the substance that causes similar symptoms in healthy individuals. This substance is then administered in a particular dilution (potency), thereby stimulating the organism's capacity of self-regulation. Conventional medicine, on the other hand, uses medication as a means of supplementing a bodily insufficiency and of regulating and sometimes even suppressing processes associated with the disease."

Whatever the claims made for both homeopathy and anthroposophic medicines, the essential question is 'Do they have any benefits and if so, to what extent?' What evidence is there that these medicines stimulate the individual's powers of self healing? There is an admission in the publication that "Sometimes it is necessary to stabilize the patient's physical condition with conventional medication first". Once again, as with

biodynamic agriculture and education, Steiner has piggybacked his irrational and unverified procedures onto treatments and processes which are subject to rational and scientific verification.

In many of the preparations the links between homeopathic and anthroposophical medical treatments are very close in so far as the substances used are mixed with a high proportion of water. This raises the question 'Are these diluted medications little more than tainted water?' A statement in this publication raises questions about their efficacy "It is up to the patient and the doctor to decide whether the treatment has fulfilled its aim, and thus whether or not the medicine in question was effective. On this point anthroposophic medicine differs from conventional medicine which demands general proof of medical efficacy according to objective criteria. How many people would want to be subjected to forms of medication that were not subjected to such criteria I wonder?"

The end of this publication places much emphasis on the safety of using anthroposophical medicines. As many involve high water dilutions might this not also be a measure of their ineffectiveness?

What does the established Medical Profession think about Anthroposophical and Homeopathic medicines and treatments?

David Gorski, who graduated from the University of Michigan Medical School in the late 1980s is scathing about the University's decision to incorporate what he regards as 'quackademic medicine' (what has been named Integrative Medicine) into its curriculum even to the extent of offering a fellowship in the subject similar to what had already happened at the University of Maryland. He maintains that anthroposophical medicine, homeopathy, reiki, craniosacral therapy, acupuncture and reflexology fall into this 'quackademic' bracket. "Truly, you know that when an academic medical center has gone so far as to offer homeopathy, reflexology and reiki, its all over as far as academic credibility is concerned, and it has become a center of quackademic medicine." David Gorski was shocked to find that anthroposophic medicine was added to the list of the University's Integrative Medicine curriculum. He had thought that University "was sticking to the milder woo, like acupuncture and massage". With regard to Waldorf schools he points to Steiner's opposition to inoculation and the dangers this poses for children. "Although the European Council for Steiner Waldorf Education, which represents 700 of the 1,000 Waldorf schools worldwide, has stated unequivocally that opposition to immunization forms no part of the goals of Waldorf education, Waldorf schools are magnets for parents opposed to vaccination. One example occurred in California in 2008, when there was a measles outbreak at the East Bay Waldorf school in El Sobrante."

This opposition to inoculations, which stems from Rudolf Steiner's beliefs, is outlined in an article by [Roger Rawlings in Waldorf Watch](#). "The underlying principle of Anthroposophical medicine is that everything physical is infused with, and manifests, spirit. The causes of illness, then, are not primarily physical but instead reflect spiritual conditions. For human beings, good health is achieved when the physical organism is properly aligned with the nonphysical bodies that, Steiner taught, manifest during a human's lifetime: the "etheric body" (a set of life forces), the "astral body" (higher soul forces), and the "I" (a spark of divine selfhood or ego that separates true humans from animals and subhumans). Bad health, on the other hand, often reflects the working out of one's karmic destiny, especially sins committed in past lives (reincarnation is a central Steiner/Waldorf belief). If one enters Earthly life carrying spiritual impurities resulting from sins or errors committed in previous lives, disease can serve as a rite of passage, purging evils from one's bodily/spiritual system. Thus, medical intervention is often a bad idea: A doctor who cures a patient may be blocking the patient's karmic self-healing process.

One consequence of Steiner's medical doctrines is that Anthroposophical doctors generally avoid giving inoculations. Steiner taught that because a disease may result from karma, interfering with the illness may simply postpone the inevitable: the patient will be forced to compensate, by having the same or a similar illness, in a future life."

[This belief might also explain why some of the case histories I have described on this web site have cited instances where teachers have not intervened in cases of bullying and fail to supervise children's school playground activities.]

The Skeptics Dictionary makes reference to Rudolf Steiner's statement that a plant is a healing plant when it has a distortion or an abnormality in its physiology and/or morphology and the extension of this idea to the way willow absorbs water through its roots and the bendy nature of its branches. According to Steiner, this

property is supposed to give an indication of what plants can be used in the treatments of such ailments as arthritis, deformation of the joints, swollen joints as well as head congestion, inflammatory conditions and diarrhoea. These Steiner statements were related by Peter Hinderberger who claimed that "Steiner extended the homeopathic principle based on spiritual/scientific studies and offered answers where Hahnemann left off" [Hahnemann came up with the ideas that form the basis of homeopathy].

In response to what Steiner said, the article points out that all trees take in water through their roots and "Is there not a single plant with an abnormality that isn't a healing plant?".

Steiner considered the body as a three part system involving consumption and excretion and a rhythmic system comprising the heart and lungs to balance the other two. He also maintained that good health depends on a harmonious relationship between the physical body, spirit or vital force, the soul and the ego. This belief helps to explain why his ideas on art and dance are considered important for healing. Some of the remedies used in anthroposophic medicine are similar to herbal treatments and others are similar to homeopathic treatments.

Steiner believed that mistletoe had a role to play in the treatment of cancer. His reasoning was based on his belief that because mistletoe was a parasite, it would help to cure cancer which he regarded as a parasite on human tissues and organs. Anthroposophic mistletoe medicines include those marketed under the names Abnova viscum, Helixor, Iscador, Iscusin, Visorel, Eurixor and Plenosol. Iscador is often touted as having the ability to boost the immune system but there is no evidence that it does so. Mistletoe is listed by the American Cancer Society as an unproven cancer remedy. Controlled clinical studies have indicated that mistletoe does not have any significant effect on the survival of people with cancer. Some people can be allergic to mistletoe medicines. [An article by the Society](#) warns:

"In recommended doses, purified mistletoe extract is generally considered safe. Possible side effects include temporary redness at the injection site, headaches, fever, and chills. Rarely, in people allergic to mistletoe, a severe and potentially life-threatening condition called anaphylactic shock can develop.

Potentially dangerous interactions with conventional medicines are possible, particularly with some medications that are used for high blood pressure, irregular heart rhythm, and heart failure. Always tell your doctor and pharmacist about any herbs you are taking....The European mistletoe plant should not be eaten because all parts of it are poisonous. Consuming mistletoe has been reported to cause seizures, coma, and death. Other symptoms of mistletoe toxicity include blurred vision, nausea and vomiting, stomach pain, diarrhoea, slow or irregular heartbeat, low blood pressure, confusion, and drowsiness.

American mistletoe is considered less toxic but it can still cause upset stomach and other symptoms if it is eaten. One death has been reported in a person who drank a brew of mistletoe berries. Because of their smaller size, children or pets might be harmed by lesser amounts.

Allergy to mistletoe is rare, but can be serious. Women who are pregnant or breast-feeding should not use any form of this herb.

Relying on this type of treatment alone and avoiding or delaying conventional medical care for cancer may have serious health consequences."

Germany's regulatory agency for herbs, has approved mistletoes injections as palliative therapy (treatment that is intended to treat symptoms, not cure disease). Anthroposophic medicine is more out of touch with modern science-based medicine than homeopathy because it brings into play other metaphysical entities it refers to as the etheric body, the astral body and the ego. Steiner thought he had special clairvoyant powers and that meant that there was no need for his ideas to be tested or verified. This arrogant claim of infallibility on any topic appears to filter into all the practical outcomes of his ideas and the attitude of many anthroposophists whether they be connected with art, education, agriculture or medicine - our methods are superior to all other alternatives, seems to be the attitude!

And what is the established medical opinion of homeopathy?

The [British Medical Association](#) says it is 'nonsense' and should be banned from use in Britain's National Health Service. BMA doctors committee, vice-chair, Thomas Dolphin, maintained that "It is pernicious

nonsense that feeds into a rising wave of irrationality that threatens the hard won gains of the enlightenment, and the scientific method."

None of the criticisms I have outlined above are a dismissal of an holistic approach to medical treatments that are scientifically based. Also it may be that the practitioners of alternative treatments have more time to show a greater concern for a patients condition than might be the case for a busy General Practitioner for example and this may mean that the alternative practitioner might identify health problems that are not obvious from a medical examination e.g. stress caused by worry and anxiety. I think that establishing environments that enable GPs and hospital doctors more time for a holistic approach may be desirable, but this may depend in part on political and economic decisions and considerations.

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Anthroposophical medicine is derived from the ideas of Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925), a self proclaimed Austrian clairvoyant, who founded a movement which he named anthroposophy in 1913 after he split from the occult Theosophical Society.

BIODYNAMIC AGRICULTURE --- WALDORF-STEINER SCHOOLS --- CAMPHILL COMMUNITIES