

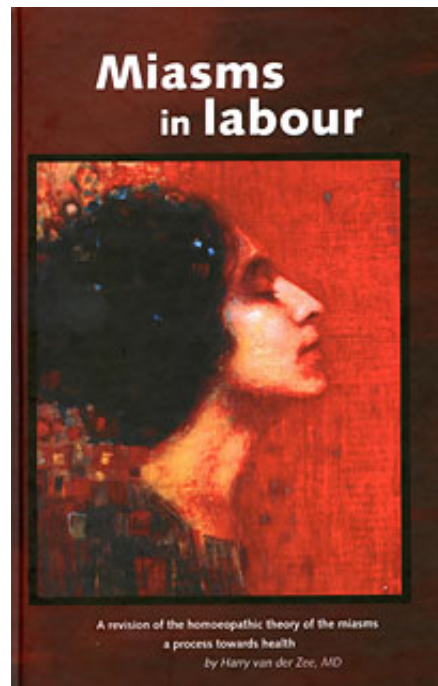
Harry van der Zee Miasms in Labour

Reading excerpt

[Miasms in Labour](#)

of [Harry van der Zee](#)

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O Introduction

The concept of a 'miasm' (from Greek miasma, taint, stain, pollution) does not originate from *Hahnemann*, but probably no (contemporary) physician elaborated on the concept as he did. In his '*Organon of the Medical Art*' he explains what his understanding of the concept entails, (translation Wenda Brewster O'Reilly)

Organon §78: 'The true, natural, chronic diseases are those that arise from a chronic miasm. When left to themselves (without the use of remedies that are specific against them) these diseases go on increasing. Even with the best mental and bodily dietetic conduct, they mount until the end of life, tormenting the person with greater and greater sufferings. Besides those diseases that are engendered by medical malpractice (§74), these are the most numerous and greatest tormentors of human race, in that the most robust bodilyanlage (rudimentary basis of an organism), the best regulated lifestyle, and the most vigorous energy of the life force are not in a position to eradicate them.'

Hahnemann describes the miasms as negative forces, against which we as individuals are rendered powerless.

Organon §79: 'Until now only syphilis has been known, to some extent, as a chronic miasmatic disease which, left uncured, only expires with the end of life. Uncured sycosis (figwart disease) likewise can not be eradicated by the life force. Sycosis was not recognised as an internal chronic miasm of its own kind, as it undisputedly is. Rather, people believed that the disease was cured with the destruction of the outgrowths on the skin. They did not heed the continuing residual wasting sickness.'

With the example of the venereal diseases we get the idea of contamination, after which a miasm starts its destructive **influence** on our health.

Organon §80: 'The internal monstrous chronic miasm of psora is immeasurably more widespread, and consequently more significant, than the two chronic miasms just named. While syphilis marks its specific internal wasting sickness with the venereal chancre and sycosis does so with cauliflower-like growths, psora documents itself (only after the complete internal infection of the whole organism) by means of a peculiar skin eruption, sometimes consisting of only a few vesicles, accompanied by an unbearable tickling voluptuous itch and a specific odour. Psora is the true fundamental cause and engenderer of almost all the other remaining forms of disease which are numerous, indeed countless...'

After this Hahnemann starts mentioning an extensive list of diseases connected to psora.

The theory of miasms has, ever since Hahnemann introduced the concept in homoeopathy, been a controversial concept.

On the one hand many see Hahnemann's theory of miasms as outdated, as a concept that resulted from some medieval ideas that were still accepted in his days, but that in the light of the medical knowledge gained in the almost two centuries that have passed since Hahnemann formulated his theory on chronic diseases, has lost all scientific ground. Besides that, it is not an easy theory to work with in the daily practice of homoeopathy, so any reason to put it aside, as a useless aberration of an otherwise brilliant mind, can be most welcome.

On the other hand a serious analysis of the different homoeopathic remedies present in our materia medica does suggest groups of remedies. And since these remedies are homoeopathic to diseased states, this suggests that there are groups of diseased states. And personally I can say that till now I have never seen, heard or read a better division than the one Hahnemann came to in his understanding of disease: on the one hand acute diseases and on the other hand chronic diseases subdivided into three miasms - psora, sycosis and syphilis.

As I will discuss later in this book, besides the acute diseases as flare-ups of one of the aforementioned chronic miasms, we can detect an independent acute miasm. The acute miasm is acute in the way it manifests itself, but also chronic, in the sense that it can influence an individual's health and well-being on a continuing basis.

People often tend to perceive the chronic diseases and the miasms in a rather Calvinistic way. Mankind has sinned, and as a result we are dealing now with a whole pack of diseases. The three chronic miasms are closely connected to venereal diseases, suggesting that improper (both hygienically and morally) sex is the causal factor of a miasmatic state. To phrase it in simple terms: the miasms are the results of not living a monogamous life, and the great diversity of chronic miasmatic diseases are the results of the many influences of as well as on the miasms through the ages.

I have always felt that there must be more to life than this idea of an increasing deterioration of the human race due to sin. This image ultimately means that creation, mankind and the creator are a failure. Where in this concept are other well established ideas like growth or transformation? Is it true that disease, and therefore the miasms, keeps us from fulfilling the 'higher purposes of our existence' (Organon §9)? Is it true that the direction from psora to sycosis and ultimately syphilis is per definition a deterioration?

When we bring down the miasms to the diseases that their names originate from, the idea seems to simply hold true. When you sleep around a lot and you do not care about hygiene too much, yes you can easily get scabies (psora - itch diathesis). And continuing in this way of life, gonorrhoea (sycosis - figwart disease) and syphilis (syphilis - chancre disease) can easily follow, as well as AIDS (although the records are not closed on whether AIDS is an infection or not), a condition that was not known in Hahnemann's days.

Hahnemann himself already lifts the concept beyond these diseases per se. He considers psora as 'immeasurably more widespread' (§80) than the other miasms and says about it:

Organon §81: 'It is, to some extent, understandable how psora could now unfold itself in so many countless disease forms in all the human race since this age-old infectious tinder has gone, little by little, through many millions of human organisms over the course of hundreds of generations, thus attaining an incredible proliferation. This is all the more understandable when we consider the multitude of circumstances that have tended to contribute to the formation of this great diversity of chronic diseases.....'

In his later work '*Die chronische Krankheiten*' ('The Chronic Diseases') Hahnemann further explains how the suppression of the psoric eruption leads to a great diversity of chronic diseases as secondary symptoms of psora.

Following Hahnemann, we are still talking about 'restoration of health' (Organon §2). We apparently have to bring the organism back to a previous better state. When we generalise this, we can say that our assumed mission is to bring humanity back to the state it was in before Adam was seduced by Eve, and Eve seduced by Satan in the form of a snake, to take a bite of that apple of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Of course I acknowledge that many times we see that the health of an individual decreases in life, and I see the results of chronic diseases often ending in what seems to be a premature death. And of course I agree that our aim should be to increase the health of each individual. I only object to jumping to the conclusion that therefore disease by itself is per definition something bad, that needs to be eradicated. Looking at disease as such easily leads to the conclusion that it is bad. Looking at it in the context of the totality of an individual's life will often change our perspective. Would the same hold true for the miasms? When we would be able to see the miasms in connection to the process of evolution and individuation, would we start to see them in a different light as well? Would it become clear to us that the miasms serve a purpose within a greater whole? And wouldn't that change our appreciation of them, and alter our attitude from fighting them to using them? For disease as such, many homoeopaths have come to accept the idea of meaning and purpose, and can work with that in

an individual case. But the step to see the miasms, from which diseased states arise, in the same light we have not made yet. After discussing what seems to me a striking resemblance between the birth-process and the miasms, we will make this next step, and discuss a perspective from which the miasms take up a useful and necessary place in the evolution and individuation process of mankind.

What helped me tremendously in broadening my view on the miasms is the analysis of the birth process by Stanislav Grof. The process of birth gives the total picture of life in a very intense, condensed way. It shows the history and the direction of mankind in a nutshell, and to me, after investigating its impressive analogy with the homoeopathic materia medica (*see for instance the chapters on Thuja, Argentina nitricum and Stramonium*), it constitutes an empirical and philosophical foundation to the theory of miasms.

Let me first introduce you to the work of Stan Grof, and show you how I got to the idea of using the birth process as a metaphor and an analogy for the miasms.



Harry van der Zee

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A revision of the homeopathic theory of the miasms - a process towards health.

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