

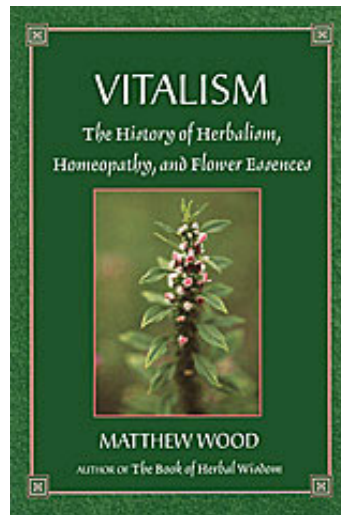
Matthew Wood

Vitalism The History of Herbalism, Homeopathy and Flower Essences

Reading excerpt

[Vitalism The History of Herbalism, Homeopathy and Flower Essences](#)
of [Matthew Wood](#)

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Preface

In 1963 historian and sociologist Lewis Mumford was asked if he wanted to update his 1934 book *Technics and Civilization* which traced the development of technological society from medieval Europe through America of the 1930s. He said that the basic insights for interpreting the events as well as the consequences of the intervening thirty years were contained within the book as it was written—and he left the work as it was.

To write any overview of history, one has to maintain a sufficient distance from it. The most important historical figures of the present often fade to obscurity, while the insignificant moment—given but three lines on the last page of the newspaper—may prove the most critical over time. To gain a perspective, one must step back very far.

Matthew Wood has, in this book, attempted the impossible: to give order to the pieces of medical history that have fallen by the wayside in traditional medical histories. These histories rarely mention the development of "vitalist" thinking. And when they do, it is relegated to footnotes—dead and forgotten—certainly not something to be taken seriously in this age of technology and scientism. One contemporary work of medical history, after giving three paragraphs to vitalism, said that its concepts "... have long been discarded by men of science" while rationalism took its place.

As we approach the second millennium, many of us can see that medicine, technology and rationalist scientific models have not given us the major answers. Homeopathy is flourishing in Europe, and its rebirth in the United States is not far behind.

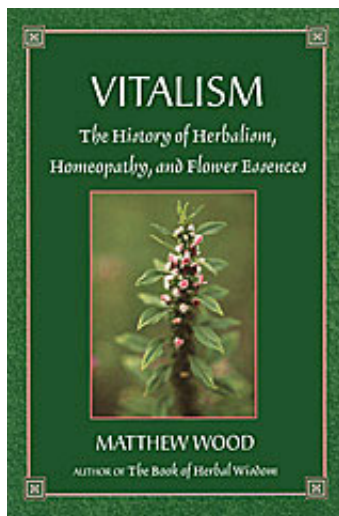
As we anticipate a reemergence of vitalist thinking, it is important to understand where it came from. This book provides that record. Matthew Wood has bound together elements usually treated disparately—the Botanical doctors, the Eclectics, the Kentian homeopaths—and shown where, when and how they have exchanged theories and techniques and where they have intersected. As a student of the history of homeopathy, I found that the insights

PREFACE

in this book give a whole different skew to the unfolding of vitalism as I had previously understood it.

Matthew Wood has given us a new piece of history. It is not complete, nor can it be. The next book—fifty years hence—will add *this* confusing century. But for now, this is the book we need. It should be chewed and digested. It is very filling!

Julian Winston
Editor, *Homeopathy Today*
Philadelphia, 1992



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