

## Syphilis

### *Death and Destruction*

The syphilitic miasm represents the forces of decay, breakdown, contraction, destruction and death, none of which are inherently bad. It just happens that we have a cultural prejudice against them, and we have a selective bias in favor of accumulation, birth, growth and expansion.

In modern western society, economic expansion is considered a 'good thing'—we are encouraged to want bigger houses, more goods and more money. If we were a healthy society, we would have an equal relationship with growth and decay, expansion and contraction, life and death, with no discrimination.

The syphilitic influence, as a neutral force, teaches us not to get attached to the things that we've created and accumulated, because everything in nature is transient and changes form sooner or later. We suffer when the things we have become attached to are taken away from us, which everything is, eventually. This is one of the core tenets of Buddhism, to recognize the impermanence of the outer forms of life.

While the syphilitic force pushes outwards and is ever-expanding, the skeleton, flesh and bones draw the boundary for us in our physical bodies. The strongest affinity of the syphilitic miasm is with the bones and skeleton, the physical structure, which gives a certain order to and defines the limits of the body-mind. If we expand our consciousness yet neglect the limitations and requirements of the physical body, we will suffer.

One of the wonderful paradoxes of life is that it would be impossible to sustain life on this planet, were it not for the process of death. If we weren't breaking down cells at the same rate that we are producing them, we would die from the over-production of cells. The equilibrium between the forces of life and death is how we maintain health, and the same is true of all life-forms on planet earth.

# The Syphilitic Challenges

## Inner Darkness

On the psychological level, I feel that the syphilitic miasm represents all the things associated with the winter and the dark, which is a time for turning inwards. If the sycotic miasm expands our consciousness, our perceptions, our exploration of other dimensions and other worlds, the syphilitic represents the *inner world* and forces us to go inside, into our own hidden depths.

The syphilitic miasm has always been associated with darkness and the night. The syphilitic anxieties, depressions and most of the pains of the syphilitic remedies are aggravated in the dark, during the winter and at night.

Culturally, we have a prejudice against the dark, the winter and the night, and we try to mitigate its influence upon us. We keep the lights on and the fires burning, not only from survival necessity, but also to prevent us from getting too close to our own darkness. In psychological terms, the syphilitic has to do with the shadow aspects of ourselves that we don't want to look at.

It is the equivalent of the 'dark matter' and 'black holes' that the astronomers have discovered in the outer reaches of our universe. We have within us the deep, dark ocean of the unconscious realm. One of the roles of the syphilitic miasm is to remind us that we also have to turn inwards and to recognize our own depths. We have to do as much inner work as outer work in order to grow and develop as healthy human beings.

Interestingly, most of us venture into the inner world only when we are forced to by life, when everything we have built up suddenly gets stripped away. It is usually a death or a collapse, a business failure or marriage breakdown, the kind of events we associate with remedies like *Aurum-metallicum*, that

causes us to question our life values and to turn inwards. Most of it is forced upon us. If we visited this place voluntarily more often, the involuntary encounters with our shadow side might not need to be so frightening.

We create problems for ourselves by avoiding the darkness completely, or by going in there and losing our way. There's a potential for great despair and a spiraling down into hopelessness. You see the deepest, darkest pits of depression and despair among the syphilitic remedies such as *Aurum*, *Syphilinum* and *Mercurius*. All of the demons that frighten us the most exist inside of us. Nothing in the outside world compares to the things that we can encounter in our own psyches.

One of the Bailey flower essences, *Moss*, is indicated for a fear of the shadow side. '*Fear of the dark spaces within*' is how Arthur Bailey describes it. This essence is helpful when you know that there is something there, you can't quite see it but you feel this thing stalking you and lurking in the background. It can manifest in the form of panic attacks or nightmares and you don't know where they come from, there is just a sudden, overwhelming fear.

The things 'out there' are only a reflection of what is inside you. In fact, the perspective of several spiritual traditions is that everything we see manifesting outwardly is a projection of our own mind. It's a collective hallucination. If we were to change the internal consensus, the outward appearance also changes.

Think about how we learn what things are. We teach children the consensus of what a chair is, its functions and form. If we didn't teach them that, we have no idea how it would appear to them. We know that when photographs were first shown to Native Americans, they only saw an amorphous, blurry image, because they had no existing reference point about what a photograph was. When you break down your conditioning, your world literally begins to collapse, and this is the main

reason we cling strongly to the collective values.

One way we attempt to deal with the darkness inside is by shutting it out with drugs, alcohol, or workaholism. We block the awareness of it and distract ourselves by various means. These self-destructive behaviour patterns are all strongly associated with the syphilitic miasm.

We can also develop a very distorted image of ourselves. We can create monsters where they don't exist. We can see ourselves as being horrible, dirty, disgusting, loathsome, and it's all a fabrication of the mind, often the result of negative childhood conditioning. This is also a syphilitic tendency seen in remedies such as *Lac-caninum*, *Syphilinum* and *Mercurius*.

## **Egocide**

The syphilitic miasm seems to break down the structures that are no longer needed so that new ones can replace them, and this includes our ideas of who we are. The sycotic miasm builds up an image, an idea of who we are, known as the persona. There comes a point where we begin to realize that this isn't who we are at all, it was just a self-identity that we adopted for a while.

Often we get attached to our roles in life, and we identify ourselves with them. The destructive syphilitic force comes along to remind us that's not who we are at all by stripping it away and showing us that we still exist. Therefore, that can't be who we are. It was just an illusion, albeit a very persistent one.

For example, I used to think that I was a homeopath. Some of you reading this book probably still think that you are a homeopath. When you immerse yourself in something as fully as many of us do with a topic like homeopathy, it actually becomes who you are for a time. It's an identity-structure that, once created, becomes part of the self-image.

But there comes a time when what you've created no longer serves you and instead becomes a limitation, and that's the point where the syphilitic energy awakens. It's a boundary that has become too tight, too restricting. To my own surprise, homeopathy became a straightjacket for me, and calling myself a homeopath didn't feel entirely true any more. I was still using homeopathy some of the time, but I could no longer identify exclusively with being a homeopath and I began to let go of my attachment to that role. It is not an easy process, especially when you have invested a lot of time, energy and money in becoming that which you say you are.

There is this important aspect of the syphilitic that has to do with ego death and letting go of the idea of who we thought we were. It seems to be happening to an enormous number of people. All of the existing forms and structures and roles that people have been quite comfortable in for hundreds of years no longer work. Many people are losing their jobs, their relationships and other forms of outer security.

If you look around you will find a lot of people going through either a relationship or career trauma, a mid-life crisis or some kind of existential breakdown. If, as healers, we are going to be of service to those who are undergoing these necessary life transformations, then we need to have some awareness of the process and we have to engage and work with it within ourselves.

### **Breaking Down/Letting Go**

The breaking down of old forms and structures brings a lot of chaos into people's lives. I can only presume that we need that chaos, that it serves to show us where we were becoming too attached to the outer forms of life, and to the false images of ourself also. That these structures get demolished is not inherently bad, but of course it can be painful, especially if we cling on through fear.

One of the main spiritual teachings is non-attachment, not to get too attached to our creations and the things that are given to us. Everything in life is given on loan. When it's taken away, it feels like we have lost a crucial part of ourselves, something we can't live without. And of course, we didn't.

One of the lessons of the syphilitic tendency is the lesson of letting go. The degree to which we can continuously and repeatedly let go, preferably consciously, is the degree to which we don't have to suffer with syphilitic illnesses or syphilitic behaviors. The destruction we associate with the syphilitic miasm is often just a stripping away of something we have been clinging to that in fact we no longer need.

### **Control/Chaos**

One of the polarities of the syphilitic miasm is the balance between control and chaos. When someone is struggling with the syphilitic tendency, there is often the feeling that they are on the verge of losing control. You can observe that it takes an increasing amount of will power for this person to keep it together, to prevent their life as they have known it from falling apart. This suggests that the person is grappling with the emerging syphilitic energy inside.

*Mercurius, Arsenicum-album and Aurum-metallicum* try to keep things stable and under control on the outside, but they feel increasingly unstable inside, and not much is needed to push them over the edge. The tendency towards ritualistic and obsessive behavior is also syphilitic. Consider the obsessive remedies like *Argentum-nitricum*. This is a way of trying to impose some order on a seemingly chaotic universe. The person will think, 'Perhaps if I count every single railing along the street, I'll be all right.' That could be one way of keeping it together on the way to the office.

One of the biggest fears that arises during a time of personal transformation is the fear of insanity, of losing control of the

mind. That fear can be expressed in countless ways in the course of a consultation. I would say it is one of the deepest fears that people are collectively feeling now. What isn't necessarily realized is that the old structures *need* to be broken down, let go of or even destroyed.

The normal response to that fear is to hold on to the familiar, to cling to the old structure even more tightly. This is the *Arsenicum* dilemma. You will often see this remedy picture arising when a person is getting close to death, and they are clinging to life by the fingernails. The decay and death of the body is the ultimate loss of control, and the ego knows it.

## **Purification**

Traditionally, purification has always been associated with fire, and I would associate the fire element with the syphilitic miasm. Fire is a symbol of destruction and breakdown, but also of transformation. Nothing is entirely consumed through fire—it gets purified and transformed into something finer. The ash, which is the refined essence of what came before, always remains.

If you want to create a nice pot which is going to last, it has to be fired. That is how it gets its strength. This is one of the great alchemy teachings—the base material has to go into the crucible. And psychologically speaking, so do we, and not just once! Fire always brings gifts that we would not be able to access any other way, but we have to be able to handle this volatile energy and find a way to contain it while it does its work of purification.

Some years ago, I heard the Irish homeopath Nuala Eising give a talk about her proving of *Fire*. Somehow she captured fire and turned it into a remedy and conducted a proving, and she took it herself, as well. She demonstrated in the conference how she had prepared the remedy and almost burned the conference hall down in the process, which was interesting in itself.

While the provers were taking the *Fire* remedy, they felt an uncontrollable impulse to clear all the clutter out of their lives. The provers would go home and look at their house and say, *'This place stinks. That's got to go, that's got to go.'* They became completely ruthless. Nuala went through her house and got rid of all the curtains, half of the furniture and most of the cats. Everything had to go, and she had this compulsion to paint the walls white.

Everything had to be clean and purified. And that's the energy of fire taken to an extreme, which is what a proving is. It's an exaggerated form of an energy that many of us need in our lives now, the energy of clearing out the clutter, emptying ourselves voluntarily and stripping away that which is no longer needed.

If you ever hire a feng shui consultant to take a look at your living space, one of the things you can be certain of is that they will tell you to clear out all of your clutter. When we accumulate and store away things that we no longer need and, in many cases, don't even like, we are obstructing the natural flow of life energy and storing up trouble for ourselves. Sooner or later, that stagnant energy will find a way to start moving again.

## Addressing the Syphilitic Miasm

In the Thomas gospel, one of the gnostic texts found in Egypt in 1945, there is a quote attributed to Jesus which says: *'If you bring forth what is within you, what you bring forth will save you. If you do not bring forth what is within you, what you do not bring forth will destroy you.'* To me, that has to be referring to the psychological shadow, an aspect of the unconscious psyche, and I feel it reflects the issues of the syphilitic miasm very accurately. If you make it conscious and work with it, it will save you. It will be exactly what you need to develop and to grow in your life. If you deny it and push it into the unconscious, it will leap out and grab you, always when you least expect it.

Meister Eckhart, a thirteenth century German mystic, said, *'The soul grows by subtraction, not by addition.'* If you look back on a period of psychological or spiritual growth, you'll generally find that it's when you've let go of something that you have made progress. It's the letting go that allows you to expand and grow. These are the lessons of the syphilitic—surrender, letting go, allowing things to break down in their own time and even encouraging them to do so when necessary. If you perceive that the time is ready for something to break down, then do it willingly. If you work with it, rather than against it, you can prevent a lot of suffering.

One of the manifestations of *'what you do not bring forth will destroy you'* could be a person who suddenly has a big accident. We associate the syphilitic miasm with accidents, but where do accidents come from? One school of thought says there are no accidents, that we create them. We don't create them consciously of course, but we could well be doing so unconsciously. Carl Jung was of the opinion that whatever we deny and push into the unconscious will tend to show up in our life as some kind of fateful event.

Accidents, sudden illnesses and other traumatic events can be

viewed as wake-up calls from the unconscious to tell us we need to change direction. If a person works with that, it can be a transformational period in their life. I've seen a number of business people who were totally driven, workaholic types and suddenly they've had an accident, and having spent weeks and weeks in bed, they are forced to look inside. It can be harsh medicine if we don't listen to it, address it, and work consciously with it. We have to give it emphasis now, because our social and cultural tendency is to deny the dark, to ignore the shadow and the unconscious realm. We have to be willing to look at what is there and bring it into the light.

Another teaching to be found in many spiritual traditions is that you have to be emptied before you can be filled. I remember Arthur Bailey telling me a story from the zen buddhist tradition. A man was seeking guidance from his spiritual teacher. He was relating all of his problems, talking non-stop. The spiritual teacher sat there absolutely calm and quiet. Then he said, *"Would you like some tea?"* The teacher poured the tea until it was overflowing, and when the man protested, the teacher said, *"That's just what you're like. Your cup's too full already. There's no room."* We have to be emptied before we can be filled. Most of us get emptied involuntarily.

## **Embracing Death**

Elizabeth Kubler-Ross did a great deal of work raising the consciousness around the processes of death, dying and letting go. In recent years, a whole mass of literature has been published about the near-death experience. Many thousands of people who have clinically 'died' under anesthetic, from a heart attack or a major injury, have survived and returned to tell the tale. This is breaking down our outmoded ideas of what it means to die.

Generally, in western culture, we have come to view death as a finality, an end, and consequently death has become something

to be feared and avoided. Medical science has become obsessed with the prolongation of life at all costs, and it is considered to be a failure of medicine when a person dies.

Many of the people who have died and resurrected tell a remarkably similar story. Usually they experience going down a dark tunnel, into the darkness, and then they see the light at the end. The darkness is always followed by an opening into the light, and frequently they are met by the smiling faces of relatives and friends, or they find themselves feeling completely safe and secure, as if all their fears and insecurities had been erased.

Thousands of people have reported a similar experience, independently of each other, of going into the darkness and then experiencing the light and the expansive opening into something quite glorious. It is such a graphic image, and it's striking how closely the death process mirrors the birth process.

In the sufi tradition they have a saying: '*Die before you die*'. The idea is to let your false-self die away while you are still alive. Indeed, this is the most powerful way to really come alive and to live life in its fullest expression of your divine origin. A research study was carried out on the individuals who had jumped from the Golden Gate bridge in San Francisco with the clear intention of ending their life, but had nonetheless survived the ordeal. It was found that they had all been transformed by the experience in a positive way, 'coming back to life' as it were with a renewed spirit.

Many ancient cultures understood the necessity to die before you die, and created elaborate death-and-rebirth rituals to carry the initiate through from one stage of consciousness to the next.

Most of us have neither the resources nor the support that would

allow us to take a month or two off work or take a sabbatical to fall apart when we need to. We don't have the cultural support for that either. Consequently, we may have to fall apart in little stages, while we're still looking after the family, holding down a job and paying the bills. This is where the help and support of a practitioner can make all the difference.

Right now, we are going through a collective transformation of consciousness. As practitioners, I believe we need to extend our repertoire beyond simply using remedies to cure diseases. We can include flower essences and other tools to support the transformation process, and we can cultivate relationships of equality and trust with our clients to help them in ways that do not encourage dependency on the practitioner.

On a global scale, I would equate the syphilitic energy with that which inevitably follows a sycotic period of great expansion, population growth and global warming. What follows is a period of global cooling, the next ice age, a great contraction and ultimately, the 'big crunch'. This would be the syphilitic energy, translated to the universal level. I don't know how many tens of thousands of years these cycles take but it seems that we are getting closer to some kind of tipping point.

## **Summary**

As I understand it, the major challenge of the syphilitic miasm is to allow to die that which needs to die, when it needs to die. To embrace death in equal measure as we embrace life, and to practice non-attachment. Another part of this challenge is to draw appropriate boundaries and to create appropriate structures for as long as they are needed, without making them too fixed or too rigid. Just as our physical body needs both a physical structure as well as flexibility to function, the structures we create also need that same flexibility.

Another aspect of the syphilitic is to be willing to go into the inner dark spaces, and not be deterred by our fears of those

places. We need to cultivate a willingness to go into the unconscious realm regularly and voluntarily, without always waiting until it comes knocking. There are many routes to the unconscious, including the exploration of dreams, via the arts, or through astrology and other forms of divination.

When Carl Jung was introduced to the Chinese oracle known as the *I-Ching*, he was initially skeptical of its value. Experimenting with it soon caused him to change his mind, however, as he found it to be an uncanny mirror of his own unconscious process. His theory of synchronicity was formulated as a result of these researches and parallel discoveries that were being made in the field of physics.