I want to begin by saying a few things about the history and philosophy of natural healing.

Later I will connect the philosophy to the contemporary practice of natural healing and explain how it guides my own approach today as a nutritionist in private practice in Sydney, Australia.

An Ancient Controversy

Something interesting happened about 2500 years ago. An argument was born.

Boiled down to its saucy essence it was a disagreement between those who believed there was some kind of inner wisdom or vital force in the body which caused the body to heal itself and those who believed that there as no such thing, rather the body was composed of little atoms which behaved according to the laws of nature in exactly the same way as the atoms in rocks or water or air.

Around 450 years BC the Greek healer, Hippocrates, famed for the Hippocratic Oath, sworn to by physicians until quite recently, was a founder and a leader of the vital force group. He saw in nature an inherent power of healing which worked unceasingly to create bodily health:

> Everything in nature tends to re-establish that perfect harmony that constitutes normal life. Every force in the individual tends to preserve a perfect equilibrium and, if it has been disturbed, to re-establish order and harmony.

Around the same time, the philosopher Democritus, also a Greek, coined the word atom to explain his idea that all matter was composed of tiny, invisible fundamental particles that were the basis of every material substance. Democritus believed that the laws that explain the behaviour of these atoms would explain everything in nature. Consequently he regarded Hippocrates' vital force as an ignorant superstition and substituted for it his purely mechanistic view of things. Followers of inner intelligence and atomistic mechanism assembled into opposing camps and continued to argue passionately through the ensuing centuries, through the whole of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance right into "modern times." The debate continues today.

Anyone who wishes to explore the story of the debate in fine detail over the centuries might refer to the multi-volume study by Harris Coulter, *Divided Legacy & History Of The Schism In Medical Thought*, published by North Atlantic Books, Richmond California. The much shorter book by Dr. Dean Black,
Inner Wisdom is an excellent summary.

Victory Claimed By The Mechanists

These big ideas wars are see-saw affairs. For a while one side appears to have the upper hand, has more prestige and a larger number of adherents. Then the fashion changes and the other point of view gains ascendancy for a while. As the 17th century began, Hippocrates was still regarded as the fount of medical wisdom. But a scientific revolution created by Newton in England and Descartes in France was to change the situation:

Descartes created the conceptual framework for the 17th century science with his view of nature as a perfect machine governed by mathematical law. Newton created the foundation for this mechanistic view of nature, and these notions of mechanism made physics the crowning achievement of the 17th century.\(^4\)

After Kepler and Leibniz, Newton taught a mathematics of celestial mechanics that explained the motions of the moon and the planets. This development seemed to support the idea first put forward by Democritus long ago that all physical phenomena could be explained in terms of simple natural laws.

As a result, the philosophy of mechanism gained prestige and medical thinking began to move in the mechanistic direction. The practitioners in the vitalistic tradition lost some status but kept the faith alive anyway.

While earlier generations of physicians, following Hippocrates, had an enormous faith in the wisdom of nature and the body's capacity to heal itself with some timely assistance from the physician, as it became more fashionable to view nature as a machine, the role of the doctor began to change. The physician would no longer be the servant of nature, but the master. The hope was for a more powerful way to overcome illness and death, but now without nature's help. An example of this change of spirit can be seen in Benjamin Rush, a leading physician of the 18th century, and one of the signers of the American Declaration of Independence:

Although physicians are in speculation the servants, yet in practice, they are the masters of nature.... Instead of waiting for the slow operations of nature, to eliminate a supposed morbid matter from the body, art should take the business out of her hands.\(^5\)

Natural Healing is still acknowledged by Rush, but he is not in awe of it. It isn't fast enough. The physician is not encouraged to be guided by or to cooperate with nature, but to take over the responsibility for the healing process and to improve it with new methods and technology. This was the eighteenth century. In the 19th and 20th centuries medicine will no longer be compounded by individual doctors, but will be developed and manufactured by large commercial enterprises using the most modern scientific technologies. The emphasis will shift from natural substances to new, man-made molecules which don't occur in nature and which may be patented. Such pharmaceutical drugs will become the preferred and later the only accepted medicines by the mainstream. Herbals and nutrients will be relegated to use by healers working outside orthodox medicine, or on its fringes.

Because herbs and nutrients don't fit easily into the double-blind testing methods used to evaluate pharmaceuticals, their use will be called by orthodoxy "unscientific", their efficacy as established by often long periods of empirical observation and clinical trials be called "unproven", and those who use them labelled as "quacks". The natural healer, thus marginalised, will respond by accusing the orthodox mainstream of treating patients whose illnesses are caused by nutritional deficiencies with "poisons". One of them will refer to medical education as "the warping of unsuspecting immature minds into a meticulous
system of commercial superstition".  

These are the extreme rhetorical positions, which are adopted by each side. I offer these viewpoints to illustrate that the old debate is still raging today as fiercely as ever. Will they ever be reconciled? I will have something to say about this, but first, let me tell you about Pasteur and Béchamp.

**Pasteur Versus Béchamp**

The professional jealousy, the slanging matches, the hard feelings, and the conflict between the distinguished Professor Béchamp and the famous scientist Louis Pasteur in France during the middle of the 19th century perfectly illustrate the collision of the vitalist and the mechanist camps in the careers of two extraordinary personalities. To cut a long story short, Pasteur believed he had found the cause of all illnesses in little creatures that float about in the air. This gave birth to his famous germ theory. Pasteur sought to eradicate illness by two famous methods. First the wearing of masks to prevent the airborne beasties from causing infections. Second by the use of mass vaccination programs to give immunity against specific germs.

Professor Béchamp, to Pasteur's great annoyance, informed the world that his research has established that germs were not only in the air, but on people's hands, skin, hair and clothes and everywhere inside them as well.

Béchamp argued that surgeons should do more than wear masks. His suggestions were not generally adopted for fifty years with all the deadly consequences that you can imagine.

Béchamp also wrote that since the omnipresent germs were safely kept in check in healthy, well-fed people who had plenty of fresh air and clean surroundings, some emphasis should be put on providing these conditions to build up people's resistance to disease. But to the establishment of his day, that seemed like a lot of impractical vitalistic nonsense. Pasteur's suggestion to give medicines to kill the germs when they had invaded the body, was preferred. The germ theory and strong medical interventions to restore health became the mainstream approach. Pasteur became internationally famous and even to present times Professor Béchamp was largely forgotten.

Today vaccination remains a point of controversy between those inclined to natural healing and the mainstream. The search for germs to account for illness remains a full-time vocation for many scientists to this day.

**Inner Wisdom Stages A Comeback**

Two scientific revolutions in our time have served to unexpectedly revive the prestige of natural healing and vitalism. These were the new dynamic systems physics of 1977 Noble Laureate Ilya Prigogine and the modern science of genetics.

Prigogine, building on obscure work of the brilliant French mathematician Henri Poincaré, established that while Newton's mathematics described the movements of planets fairly well, though not exactly, this was because these systems dissipated energy very slowly. In cases where the system dissipated energy rapidly and was in disequilibrium, as for instance in living things, the Newtonian mathematics were useless.

As he later wrote:

*The Golden Age of Classical Science is gone and with it also the conviction that Newtonian...*
rationality ... forms a suitable basis for a dialogue with nature. ⁸

Prigogine's work didn't just set back the myth of the universe as a machine. It showed it was absurd. The ambition of mechanism to explain everything on the basis of extensions of celestial mechanics was shattered. And the mathematics of chaos theory which emerged with the latest physics suggested that small events could change very large systems in ways which could not be foreseen or even rationally explained. The physical world was inherently unpredictable and certainly beyond man's control. This applies particularly to living things which are a perfect example of systems in disequilibrium that rapidly dissipate unless fresh energy is constantly introduced into them. It is these characteristics of human beings which make them react so unpredictably to man-made medicines.

A prime example of this was the interferon fiasco of several years ago. Scientists had learned that interferon made by the body played an important role in ridding the body of serious diseases. But when interferon was introduced artificially it had the effect of disrupting the body's biochemistry and not working in the way envisaged at all. Prigogine showed the human body was not a machine and could not be repaired as one repairs a machine. The ideal of eventual perfect control by man of the body was proved a chimera and a false hope. The strong intervention would always have the problem of unforeseen and uncontrollable side effects.

The other revolution, genetics, has provided, again unexpectedly, important scientific support for inner wisdom. The mysterious source of the phenomenon identified so long ago by Hippocrates, namely the body's inbuilt capacity to repair damage, heal itself and re-establish its equilibrium, is to be found in the genes. More about this later.

In light of this one might ask how we can explain the following statement by a prominent MIT molecular biologist and cancer specialist written in 1985:

Many biologists of the future will think of a biological system in terms of a series of well-defined mechanical parts that can be dismantled, engineered, and re-assembled under the guidance of the molecular mechanic. ⁹

Apparently we should not expect the two camps to cease this debate. There are very strong human reasons to expect it to continue for a long while.

Doctors or Natural Healers?

Considering the foregoing, what should our attitude be toward the current main stream of medical practice and toward natural healers? My own view is that we should be grateful there are both, and we should learn how to use both to the advantage to our health.

There are many areas in which mainstream medicine not only excels but is indispensable. For example:

1) When you are in an accident and suffer traumatic injuries
2) When you are in the acute phase of an infectious disease
3) When you have absorbed poisons

In these situations mainstream medicine can save your life. There are of course other circumstances when you should visit the doctor or go to hospital, but the three obvious I have mentioned make the point.

Similarly there are many areas in which natural healers excel. Properly educated and trained practitioners in naturopathy, nutrition, herbalism, homeopathy, chiropractic, and many other natural modalities can help
your body to heal itself and correct many chronic conditions. In general natural healing therapies excel as preventive medicine and for long term health improvement. To enjoy optimal health, I believe people are best advised to use both mainstream medicine and natural healing.

**How Does the Body Heal Itself?**

The key to the body's inner wisdom and the principle reason that the body can heal itself is the genetic system. It can be thought of this way....when your mother and father conceived you, they each gave you a seed. The two seeds fused and you started to grow. The growing process was controlled by the 46 chromosomes with their approximately 30,000 genes. Of course these could produce you only in the unique environment of the womb. After about 9 months you emerged on your birthday.

But the story does not end there. You see, in almost every cell in your body there are exact copies of those original seeds with their 46 chromosomes and 30,000 genes. And the genes in those cells of yours are still working. Night and day, without ever stopping, they work and work and work, rebuilding your cell structures when they are damaged or worn out, manufacturing hormones, immune system components, cellular enzymes and so forth. And they still have the same goal they always have... to build you exactly according to the original parental instructions in the genes. This process accounts for the body's amazing capacity to heal itself and to maintain its internal equilibrium and harmony.

When you are built according to your genetic blueprint you are whole - which is what healthy means - and you are optimally well. Indeed you have health which is far superior to merely "normal". You have true wellness, wellness being what you have when healing makes you whole. But in order for all this to happen your cells need to be provided regularly, almost continuously, with fresh, adequate supplies of the right building materials. When the genes specify selenium as they do for certain of the body's molecules, then only selenium will do. No substitute can do the job. So, if your cells don't get selenium, then you cannot be whole, i.e., you cannot be completely healthy, and you won't have wellness.

This is true for more than 50 essential nutrients, including zinc, chromium, manganese, copper, iron, indium, many other minerals, and also vitamins, amino acids, and the essential fatty acids. If all of these are not in your diet, you are destined to have chronic degenerative illness. Remember, your body cannot make the essential nutrients. They must be in the diet. Now here is a problem: you are not getting them. According to the US Food and Drug Administration, the average American diet is deficient in all of the more than 59 essential nutrients. Why? Because they are not in the food that is available to be eaten. This is true in Australia a well.

**Why Western Civilisation Does Not Provide Good Nutrition**

The reason essential nutrients are not in our diet today is because of how our civilisation operates. Firstly, many essential minerals are no longer in our soils. Why? Because crops take out about 60 minerals from the soils as they grow and farmers usually put back only three minerals back into the soil - potassium, nitrogen, and phosphorus. So every year the mineral content of our food is less than it was the previous year, particularly trace minerals such as, for example, chromium which regulates blood sugar levels, and zinc which enters into more than 80 enzymes vital for cellular functioning.

The most-missing nutrients are the essential fatty acids, which are crucial to good health, and which have been eliminated from our food by modern processing methods. The B vitamins are in short supply for the same reason, as are vitamins C, E, and virtually all the other essential vitamins. The results are all around us. People who should be and could be in wonderful health, are not. Diabetes, cancer, heart disease, strokes, obesity, infertility, arthritis, more than 100 immune deficiency diseases and many other serious illnesses develop because of long-term essential nutritional deficits. Add to this environmental pollution...
and we get a sorry picture of our civilisational state of health.

**The Strategy of Natural Healing**

The treatment of chronic degenerative health problems needs to be holistic because that is the way the body works. It is a key to understanding how to assist the immense natural healing capacities of the body. Every bodily cell is connected to every other by complex networks of communication and supply. The blood, lymph, nervous, hormonal and immune systems work inter-relatedly to maintain the bodily harmony and balance which are seen in health.

In order to understand any chronic problem, you have to see how the various parts of the body are contributing, tracing the problem back to its causes, often in remote structures. For example, eczema, psoriasis, acne and other skin eruptions are caused generally by metabolic problems that begin in the gastrointestinal tract and the liver. There are main organs of excretion in the body: the bowels, the kidneys, the bronchi, and the skin. When toxins are not properly processed by the liver for discharge through the bowels or kidneys, the body will move the toxins to the skin where they can be excreted. Restore the liver, and the skin eruptions gradually cease. But to fix what is ailing the liver, it is often necessary to simultaneously repair a deteriorated gastrointestinal system. The treatment may require dietary change, nutrient supplementation, fibres and beneficial bowel bacteria.

Everything in the body is related and the weak and dysfunctional links in the chain of events must all be identified and addressed to solve the problem. When the nutrient ingestion, digestion, absorption, circulation, cellular acceptance and utilisation, and excretion are working correctly, the correct nutrients get into the cells, the genes use them to effect repairs, and the body heals itself naturally. The result is wellness. Chronic degenerative conditions caused by nutrient deficiencies can be reversed when the missing nutrients are made available to the cells. This is what natural healing is all about.

**The Importance Of Holistic Diagnosis**

Because each individual has a somewhat different genetic endowment, people react differently to nutrient deficiencies. Some produce enzymes that enable them to weather the storm better than others. For example, some can cope with less chromium than others and still manage their blood sugar levels fairly well. In some people, it is their livers that suffer. Others find their lungs react first, or it may be the kidneys, or brain. The nutritional lacks will affect their vulnerable point. That is where trouble will first be noticed.

Often several organs or systems will be involved, some more so than others. Treatment will depend on which organs are affected. If it is the liver, then the nutrients which the liver mostly uses are needed. If it is the blood, then other nutrients come into play. And so forth. What is needed for this kind of work is a diagnostic tool that enables the practitioner to survey the body structures - the organs and systems - quickly and accurately. I am not aware of any tool which is better for this purpose than the modern diagnostic iridology developed by the Munich school of Joseph Angerer.

Traditional iridology has been around for centuries, but modern iridology began in 1946 when Angerer started to investigate its possibilities as a tool for understanding the causes of health disorders. Professor Angerer trained thousand of medical practitioners in his methods and together they assembled a vast body of knowledge correlating eye signs with illnesses and metabolic disorders of all kinds. The science of iridology was greatly enhanced by the use for the first time of powerful binocular microscopes which brought in view subtle details never seen before.

For more than four decades, Angerer-associated practitioners have met at annual conferences to share new discoveries relating eye signs to common or rare health problems. Using information from x-rays,
autopsies, surgical operations, blood tests and hospital observations, the base of knowledge has grown rapidly until it now fills an encyclopaedia of several volumes. This was edited by Angerer until his death in 1993 at age 87. Today the work is carried on by Angerer's disciples. I received my training in the Angerer method in Sydney and have found it to be an invaluable tool for accurate, holistic diagnosis for health problems. I also use blood tests etc. to confirm, clarify, or modify the diagnoses I have made using Angerer's science.

Using the Angerer method with a powerful binocular microscope one can identify inflammation, atrophy, underfunctioning and hyper-functioning, toxicity, degenerative processes, and tendencies to break down of all the organs: for example liver, kidneys, lungs, skin, brain, heart, spleen, blood, and all the endocrine glands for example pituitary, adrenals, thyroid, thymus, ovaries, testicles etc. etc. The list of what can be identified in the eye is enormous. Usually the eye diagnosis taken together with the patient's history, symptoms and signs yield a clear indication for treatment. The length of time required to accomplish this during the initial consultation is generally about one and half hour. When called for I refer the patient to another health practitioner. The medicines I use to treat patients are all natural ones, because the last thing I want to do is add to the patient's toxic burden by giving him/her more xenobiotic (alien and toxic) molecules. Nutrients including vitamins, minerals, amino acids, essential fatty acids and proper herbal and homeopathic medicines are not toxic and the body's biochemistry can make use of them without stress or harmful side effects.

These days the use of nutrients and herbs is based on scientific research, clinical studies, and recently even some double blind medical trials. The fact that the medicines are natural does not mean that their use is unscientific.

Metabolic Detective Work in Natural Healing

One does need to do some metabolic detective work to devise the optimum treatments for patients. There are many case studies that I could give to illustrate this point, but for reasons of space I will just mention one to give you a general idea of how it works.

Case study:

Mrs. M came to my Clinic with poor circulation to the hands and feet. In Mrs. M's case her hands and feet were cold and white in summer and blue and "freezing" in winter. She had to dress up warmly in summer and in winter wore gloves and overlapping pairs of socks day and night, indoors and out. This ameliorated the problem a little but certainly did not solve it. Now 67, she has had the condition since age 17 - enduring fifty years of suffering. She had been to several practitioners during this time but had never found relief. She came to me hoping I might be able to help (I had previously treated her sister, who had a difficult health problem of a different nature).

I spent an hour and fifteen minutes in my initial consultation with Mrs. M, during which time I took notes on her health history, diet and lifestyle pattern, symptomatology, and then had a look at her eyes through my binocular microscope. Mrs. M, I saw, was a neuro-lymphatic constitutional type, indicating she had a sensitive nervous system providing her with excellent understanding of herself and others, but predisposing her to enervation from emotional and physical stress. Also, her mucous membranes were inflamed throughout her body. The natural healing treatment for Mrs. M consisted of:

- Liquid vitamin B Complex to heal her nervous system and provide more energy.
- Vitamin C and Bioflavonoids to improve her circulation, especially the micro circulation in her liver.
- Omega 3 and Omega 6 fatty acids in correct ratio and dosage to relax and elasticise the blood vessels, make the blood cells unclump to carry oxygen to the cells more efficiently, and improve the strength and efficiency of red blood cell membranes, and body cell membranes generally.
- A herbal combination known to be an effective blood cleanser.
- A trace mineral known to improve cellular oxygen biochemistry and electron flow in energy producing reactions in the mitochondria of cells.
- Vitamins A and D and Papain and Alpha Amylase to improve mucous production and heal the inflamed mucous membranes.

About a month later, Mrs. M held her hands over my desk and informed me that both they and her feet were warm. Her mucous membranes were also much improved. This case taught me that even long-standing conditions will sometimes yield to synergistic therapy, combining several metabolic treatments to correct a stubborn condition. Of course, one needs to constantly expand one's knowledge of Anatomy and Physiology, Biochemistry, Nutrition and Pathology to meet the challenges of metabolic detective work and problem-solving. Happily, it turns out that the method just illustrated - aggregating a number of natural treatments - can be applied usefully to virtually every patient's health problems because natural medicines used are both non-toxic and compatible with each other and with the body's biochemistry.

Final Thoughts

I hope my talk has helped you to deepen your understanding of the philosophy of natural healing, to appreciate that it is an approach which is firmly supported by the most modern ideas of science, and is effective in practice. When your body is properly nourished, according to the biologically unique requirements of you as an individual, and when the causes of ageing are addressed, you can come close to achieving your inherent genetic potential for optimal health and wellness.

When you are truly well your whole life unfolds differently. You have the strength and energy to seize larger opportunities. You also enjoy the little pleasures of life more. You are at your best. Who knows what will happen? I hope I have encouraged you to do all that you can to ensure that your personal journey to wellness is successful.

FOOTNOTES:


