The Causes of Disease

Abstracted by Jeff Swart from:
T. L. Nichols, M.D., F.A.S. - *Esoteric Anthropology (The Mysteries of Man)*,
First published in 1853
[Ed. emphasis added]

To the Reader. - Preface to the American Edition
…
I write, not to get consultations, but to prevent their necessity; not to attract pattens, but to keep them away; and to enable them to get health without my further care…. That every one may understand the structure and functions of this system, the conditions of health, the causes of disease, and all modes and processes of cure. **It is a book for the prevention of disease; for the preservation of health; and, as far as that end can be attained, for its restoration.**

As he material basis of all reform, and all progress of humanity toward its true destiny, the world wants health. Individuals are sick, communities are sick, nations are sick. The very earth is diseased. **All must be cured together**; **but the work must begin with the individual**. Every man who purifies and invigorates his own life, does something for the world. Every woman who lives in the conditions of health, and avoids the causes of disease, helps the race; and if such persons combine their purified and invigorated lives in healthy offspring, they do a noble work for the redemption of universal humanity.

And now, my human brother or sister, all I ask of you is, that, with a clear mind, and a pure heart, a love of the truth, and a willingness to accept it, you read the following pages; and, so far as the teaching they contain commend themselves to you erase, that you follow them faithfully in **a life of purity and devotion to the highest good**. There are many things which may be contrary to your preconceived notions. **Humanity lies prone under the errors of ages. The miseries of mankind are but the symptoms of its error of thought and life**. There is no disease without a cause, and the cause is closely related to the remedy.

The world is cursed by ERROR and DISCORD – it must be by TRUTH and LOVE.

XIV The Causes of Disease

Disease... is the opposite, or lack of health. It is “Any deviation from health, in function or structure, the cause of pain or uneasiness, distemper, malady, sickness, disorder, any state of a living body in which the natural functions of the organs is interrupted or disturbed, either by defective of preternatural action…”

If there is any **want of harmony in body or mind**, it is disease. If there is inaction of any function, irregularity, excess, or any kind of discordance, it is disease.

And as the great sign and **result of health is pleasure or happiness**, so the great symptom and **effect of disease is pain or misery**. And as we have pleasure in all degrees, from the simplest feeling of satisfaction to the keenest ecstasy, so we have all degrees of pain, from uneasiness to agony.

All disease is attended by a lack of nervous energy, or the presence of morbid matter in the system, or both combined.

The pain and action of disease are the outcries and efforts of nature for relief.

A **bad atmosphere**, the crowd-poison of large towns and cities, produces cholera infantum, typhus, and lung diseases. Wherever people are crowded together, without cleanliness, the air becomes pestiferous.

Diseased food – as the flesh of diseased animals; the milk of distillery fed cows; fish and flesh in the process of putrefaction; sausages, made of offensive materials; measly pork; narcotic and stimulating drinks; beer and porter, made worse by drugs; tobacco – these are all prolific causes of disease.

Unhealthy habits, wearing filthy clothes, the neglect of daily bathing, also tend to clog the pores, prevent the throwing out of effete, waste, and morbid matters, and cause the re-absorption of matters already expelled, and are fruitful causes of disease.

As all the functions of life are carried on by the **nervous energy**, a loss of that is not only a direct cause of functional debility, but by diminished vigor of secretion, it prevents the waste matter being carried out of the system; and this matter, thus retained, acts as a poison, and is a cause of almost every kind of disease. This reacts again; exhaustion causes impurity, and impurity produces exhaustion.

Consequently, **anything which exhausts the power of the organic and animal system** – anything which **destroys the nervous energy**, is in many ways a cause of disease.

Intense labour, care and anxiety, protracted watchings, domestic unhappiness, any source of grief, my exhaust the nervous energy, and be a cause of disease. **Sedentary employments, or monotonous labour**, overtasking on set of organs and leaving the others without employment, may have the same effect.

The undue, and therefore, disordered activity of any passion or appetite, is a cause of disease, by turning aside or exhausting the nervous energy that should be given to the whole system. Inordinate eating and drinking, avarice, ambition, all single and excessive passions, destroy the equilibrium of the system….

The abuse of amativeness, … rapidly exhausts the nervous power. The generative function takes strength from the organic and the animal powers.

The craving for flesh, on account of its stimulating qualities, is another result of nervous exhaustion. A flesh diet is exciting, feverish, inflammatory, as well as impurity's, and often poisonous.

Flesh-eating, giving us an unnatural, excited life, leads to sensuality; sensuality brings exhaustion; exhaustion demands stimulation; and so the work of destruction goes on.

Dress may be a cause of disease, and an aggravation of other causes… [Too much, to tight, etc]

Chill, form any cause, unless it is succeeded by immediate re-action and warmth, is a cause of disease…. Fresh and pure air is a necessary of

healthy life, but a current of cold air, when we are too weak to resist it, causes a sudden closing of the pores, and often leads to serious disorder.

Indolence, or lack of exercise of body or mind, is both and effect and a cause disease. Laziness is often a real disease; …

Attitude my be a cause of disease. **Stooping**… interferes, therefore, with innervation, respiration, circulation, digestion, and disturbs, directly or indirectly, all vital processes.

Lack of light is a cause of disease in vegetables and animals. **Light is the source of life**; darkness is the synonym of death. All dark places places are full of disease.

Occupations are causes of disease, by their exhaustion, their monotony, their deprivation of health conditions, their slavery, and the utter hopelessness of improvement…. Many employments also introduce morbid matters into the system… The manufactures of drug poisons, given as medicines, are soon destroyed by their inhalation and absorption.

The **excessive and subversive actions of the passions** are causes of disease…. Disappointed love and ambition, Anger, grief, and even violent joy… Sorrow, care, anxiety, jealousy… *All discord of the passions is disease*

Disease of the mind if reflected upon the bodily organs; …

Poisons taken into the system…

All the **waste matter of the body**, … becomes, **if retained the system**, a cause of disease, a real virus, a true poison… Any **interruption of the functions of skin, liver, kidneys, intestines, or lungs**, is, therefore, a cause of disease by the retention of morbid matter

Similar matter taken in food, and especially in **eating the carcases of dead animals**, which always contain it, is a cause of disease… These poisons may be drunk in impure water, and also inhaled in crowded atmospheres, and absorbed by contact with uncleanly persons. **Plagues**, camp-fevers, jail-fevers, typhus, dysenteries, cholera, and many other

diseases, are either solely caused or greatly aggravated by this animal poison.

Tea, coffee, alcohol, opium, tobacco, all stimulants, and all narcotic poisons in habitual use, are causes of disease,…

Closely allied to these, as causes of disease, are the **poisonous drugs administered as medicines**. And it must not be forgotten that syphilis, scrofula, and probably every kind of blood-poison, can be taken by **vaccination**, which, so far from being a protection against small-pox, seems to have been one of the chief causes of the late epidemics. ***It is never safe to take matter from another body into our own***. We risk taking all its diseases. There is no doubt that thousands have been mortally poisoned by vaccination, made compulsory by law upon the whole population.

Stimulants weaken the parts they excite; **tonics** destroy tone; **cathartics** produce constipation;…

Causes of disease exist in the water we drink. **Hard water**, containing lime in some of its combinations, or other mineral matter, is totally **unfit for drinking**, and is the cause of gravel, stone, goitre, and other morbid growths, and is also a common cause of dyspepsia and bowel complaints. Hard water, that will not wash the skin, nor penetrate and soften food in cooking, is not fit for drink, and scarcely for bathing….

Water containing vegetable and animal impurities, and animaculae, may introduce morbid matters into the system. Fresh cold spring water, or clean, well-preserved rain water, however, contains no animal life…

Causes of disease, of more or less potency, are found in the **atmosphere**, in what is called ***malaria***, which simply means bad air, but is used to designate the unknown cause of many endemic and epidemic diseases…

In a **crowded, close room**, the oxygen is soon exhausted, and the air filled with **carbonic acid**, besides much diseased matter. A fashionable singer orders here concert-rooms to be shut close, and ladies are carried out fainting. All suffer from want of breath and poisoning. Everyone's health is

diminished and their lives shortened. …wretchedly ventilated court-rooms… dungeons…

The **malaria** which seems to be the cause of typhus fever, dysentery, camp fever, jail fever, ship fever, yellow fever, appears to be the putrid and poisonous exhalations of either decaying vegetable or animal matter, or of uncleanly and diseased living persons. **These diseases are therefore contagious** – that is, each sick person helps to poison the atmosphere that produces or determines the disease.

Liability to disease varies in individual, according to several circumstances. In every community, exposed to the same general causes of malaria, contagion, etc., some are well, some sick, some die. For all this there must be a reason. Those who have the most vitality, the most power of resistance, the least predisposition to disease, who have been born and are living in the most healthy conditions, are proof against against outward causes of disease. [Examples follow)… **In proportion to the energy of our vitality and the purity of our lives, is our power to resist and overcome diseasing influences.**

There is **another preventive to particular forms of disease**, in the power of the system to adapt itself to unusual and even unnatural conditions, which may be called the power of habit or **acclimation**…

It is in this way men bear so much evil, live in filth, eat flesh, breathe foul air, use tobacco and whisky, and become hardened to all the miseries of life. They are **acclimated**. **But** whisky, and malaria, and pork, and medicine, and domestic broils, and tobacco, **are evils none the less, and they kill none the less**, because nature has the power of fortifying herself, and making a protracted instead of a violent resistance.

For all acute disease are the **strong and rapid efforts of nature to rid us of disease**; while **chronic diseases** are the weakened and slow efforts to the same end. **The causes of diseases are of two kinds**; **weakness**, original; or by **exhaustion of the nervous power or vital energy**; and the **presence of diseasing matter in the system**. The latter may be hereditary, an effect, or even a cause of the former. The **presence of a sick person** will produce an effect of painful sympathy upon an impressible

person. **Even a letter** coming a thousand mils, will produce on such a person, before it is opened, such pain as the writer may haven suffering. **A magnetized ring or lock of hai**r gives to some persons a feeling of the mental states and bodily condition of an absent friend. **If I lay my hand upon the region of Firmness, Self-esteem, etc., I give a feeling of strength**. By an opposite influence, I produce depression and pain. I have known persons to be thrown into convulsions by the simple **feeling of the spheres of those around them**. The presence of a person of a more congenial sphere, or in another state of feeling, would restore them.