From the time of Hippocrates (400 BC) there have been two distinct medical systems, each defined according to an explicit philosophy. One followed from the existing philosophy of "Rationalism" (now called Allopathic medicine) and the other followed the philosophy of the "Empirist". Today the empirical approach (also called Vitalist approach) is known as holistic or alternative medicine and forms the basic from which the naturopathic tradition was formed. Since we know so much about the Allopathic or Orthodox system of medicine and so little about the Alternatives we have to ask how it is that one system became so predominant over the other. This questions leads to an interesting history lesson and in order to give you enough of the details for a fair review, I will divide the discussion over 2 articles. In this first part I will discuss the general differences between the two schools of thought.

The original debate between the Allopath and the Vitalist centered around one question: Which is the more appropriate way to obtain truth and knowledge? The Vitalists would say that Experience is the legitimate way, and the Rationalists have argued that truth can be obtained only by Reasoning.

Very generally, the Empiricist approach was to look at the human body as integrated into a whole, which in turn interacts with its environment. Symptoms were viewed as the body's reaction to some aspect of its environment - stress, food, pollutants, climate, medicine, etc. Treatments were based on all of the patient's symptoms, which were not necessarily common to other persons suffering from the same so called "disease". The empiricist did not categorize groups of conditions, but saw each individual as a unique case relating to his environment in his own unique way. Most importantly, the empiricist saw the healing force as being within the body, and the physician's role was to assist the body back to its natural state of homeostasis by cooperating with its efforts to heal itself. Classical homeopathy is a perfect example of this approach.

The Rationalists however needed to explain illness, to be able to develop specific treatments, and a body of scientific knowledge. Rationalists looked for greater precision and their reasoning led them to search for common denominators and groups of symptoms that were found identical in all patients having the same assumed disease. The rationalist saw the disease as the primary concern and assumed that it was the doctor who possessed the ability to effect the healing inasmuch as nature is inherently weak and had "gone wrong". It is perhaps a very human response to want to explain things and to organize information, but historically, what was beginning from this philosophy was a tendency towards being "anti-disease" and to condoning heroic intervention. That is, the rationalists sought to destroy disease, which necessitated that they deny the innate healing powers of the body. Major interventions including bloodletting, and strong elements such as sulphur and mercury were used to route out or eradicate the disease, but unavoidable to this approach was the subsequent weakening of the body.

Hippocrates, the Father of Medicine, was clearly an empiricist. With his most significant dictum "First, do no harm"; he maintained a primary trust in nature. Hippocrates warned very early against the rationalist approach, which, rather than cooperate with natural laws, attempted to override, control or replace them. He also stated that: "Though untaught and uninstructed, it (the body) does what is proper...to preserve a perfect equilibrium...to re-establish order and harmony".
However, prominent rationalist thinkers of the time included Aristotle (300 BC), who developed the philosophy of rationalism, Galen (129 -199 AD), who formulated the method of scientific deduction, René Descartes (1596-1650), Isaac Newton (1642-1727) and William Harvey (1578-1657), significantly influenced the pendulum swing in the direction of a mechanistic approach to understanding the human body and disease. "Scrutinize the parts to learn about the whole...moving us further from the empirical principles of holism to the mechanistic principles of analysis". In the field of Medicine this led us to study our bodies in terms of organs, then of tissues, then of cells and of biochemical processes, and to treating the symptoms of the body parts in isolation rather than the imbalance of the body as a whole.

From the very beginning "the rationalists were prepared to embark on a crusade against disease with what little they knew - convinced that they knew more about curing the body than did nature itself". Yet, their deductions were based on a science that was grossly inaccurate by today's standards and they were not getting the better results. The Vitalists continued to get results and to treat most of the nations patients.

One of the cornerstones in the Allopathic tradition was the invention of the microscope, which facilitated the deduction that microbes were responsible for disease. Then with the advent of the antibiotic and sulpha drugs to kill these microbes, Allopaths cinched the orientation of medicine into one of destruction of disease, and into the notion of a helpless body, which needed heroic medical intervention.

The "germ theory" of disease as proposed by Pasteur is controversial. At the same time in history two other theorists were claiming that the germ did not cause the disease but was merely an opportunist, and that the weakened body environment allowed the germ to infect. Pasteur is said to have biased his theory towards disease being caused by outside forces in order to win favor with his peers and the Rationalist movement. On his deathbed however, in the name of science, Pasteur admits - "Bernard was right - the germ is nothing - the environment is everything".

It wasn't that Pasteur's confession came too late. The Allopathic approach and its crusade against disease needed the germ. The magic bullet ideology in medicine was sanctioned when antibiotics were discovered to be effective against these invaders. From this point forth was the quest for a pill for every ill and the aspiration to eradicate all other diseases in the same way. However, when illnesses are not infectious, but due to body degeneration, as are most of today's diseases (heart disease, diabetes, arthritis, osteoporosis, etc.) magic bullets don't correct them. This is where we most have to adjust our thinking toward consideration of the other system of medicine. More than any other time in history we need to relearn how to cooperate with the body's restorative powers and understand how it is reacting to its internal and external environment.

In all fairness to the Rationalist trend in deductive thinking, it is very important to keep in mind the cultural and social back ground prevailing during the Middle Ages. Briefly, our reality then was defined and restricted by the church. This authority not only decided our concepts of God and spirituality but also the world of cause and effect. In these times the churchmen interpreted everything from the chance thunderstorm to crop failure. When the trust in these explanations began to breakdown due to revolt against corruption, in the 14th and 15th century, everything once thought as truth was shaken.

The thinkers of that day thus encouraged that we systematically explore the world and the mandate for science began. Vanquished was blind obedience to religious doctrines and authorities. We set out on a quest for the provable in order to take back our power. Unfortunately, along with the mass distrust in corrupt authorities, we in essence, threw out the baby with the bath water. We lost a sense of connectedness and our spiritual relationship with our world and with our sense of the whole, including the body. We needed verifiable answers and we became pre-occupied with explaining our reality through science. Put in historical
perspective then Democritus and other Rationalist thinkers of the time could not see how believing in innate healing powers (as the Vitalist believed) could be different than believing in the gods. They were later to advance the concept that everything in the universe could be explained in terms of particles and atoms launching the convention of looking from the small to the large, instead of the large to the small.

By Glen Pavelich

Continued Part 2: Entry of the AMA and the Pharmaceutical Industry.

(References: Health Revolution by Robert Atkins, MD; Health at the Cross Roads by Dean Black, Ph.D; Save Your Life by Michael Culbert, Celestine Prophecy by James Redfield)

PART II

In Part I, I discussed the differences between two systems of medicine and how it is their intrinsic philosophies, which drives them apart both in theory and in practice.

In brief, the Allopathic approach (Western Medical Model of today) has been based throughout history upon the concept that the physician is responsible for the healing, and that "disease" must be irradiated from the body using heroic intervention. It is central to Allopathic belief that the disease is stronger than the body. This philosophy (Rationalism) has also maintained that man must use his reasoning to decipher disease processes, must develop specific treatments for each disease, and must accumulate a body of scientific knowledge in order to explain both disease and the basis for treatments and further discovery. The body as a whole is broken down into countless, isolated parts and treated as such, due to a scientific model, which aspires to control body processes in order to restore health or rid the body of an invading disease.

On the other hand the Vitalist approach (Natural or Holistic Models) have maintained, since the time of Hippocrates, that it is the body that does the healing, and is more than capable of irradiating it's own disease. The disease itself represents a body out of balance, or simply one that has reached the point where it can no longer compensate or maintain homeostasis given the level of toxicity, deficiency, or neglect. The essence of this approach is that we should honor the body's innate restorative powers by cooperating with it rather than interfering with it - which essential means (in brief) to keep it well nourished and free of accumulative toxic load.

Historically, the Vitalists philosophy did not attempt to collect data on individual diseases and specific treatments; rather they formulated treatments for the entire body, not as separate pieces but as a whole unit with a very exceptional intelligence. They proceeded from their observations of what created health, instead of investigating what caused disease, since if you can maintain optimal body health then disease is not a concern. Lastly the Vitalists physician saw himself as a facilitator to the wisdom of the body not as a hero.

At the close of the last article we also acknowledged that the scientific approach was most likely destined to take prominence for a time, given our medieval history and the need to break away from superstition and centuries of suppression. However, in the process we lost a sense of connectedness and spiritual relationship with our world and with our sense of the whole, including the body. Subsequently, the health philosophy embodied by the Vitalists was discarded almost entirely. The premise of this article however is to make a second pertinent point, that the discarding of holistic healing modalities was helped along the way by the allopathic schools who vied for dominance in the field of medicine.
Since it was the Vitalists who continued to get the better results, it is understandable how the Rationalists might resent the almost nonexistent "academic" background of alternative therapists, in light of the profound pride it was taking in its own influential halls of learning. It was the Vitalist who threatened their success and, over time open conflict developed between the two systems of healing. In the history of medicine this was an unfortunate political backlash, which is yet another example of how man himself, gets in his own way.

The War against "Quackery" officially stared in 1849 between the Rationalists against Samuel Hahnemann, founder of Homeopathy. The main point of discussion here is that it doesn't matter so much about the direction of a theory, or that they differ, the problem becomes the intensity with which they are promoted. "In 1849 the orthodoxy established the American Medical Association for the expressed purpose of combating Vitalist opposition, barring homeopathic doctors from its ranks, as well as barring any referral of patients to homeopaths. Strong measures to maintain their regulations was geared to creating total uniformity in American medicine." (Health Revolution - Atkins)

Riding on the shirrtail of the Rationalist philosophy came the pharmaceutical industry. Following economic success during the American Civil War, pharmaceutical companies began to advertise in medical journals and to train detail men to travel the countryside to educate doctors. By 1916 there were over 39 thousand patented medicines and allopathic practitioners found themselves pressured to stay up on the latest medical research. The pharmaceutical industry began producing literature to educate the practicing doctor on new diseases and methods of cure using the compounded formulas they had patented. "Between 1877 and 1883 pharmaceutical companies bought out several prestigious medical journals and by 1906 all but one medical journal were supported by advertising from the drug industry. Journal ownership became exceedingly effective because it controlled the information made available for education and has subsequently seduced an entire profession" (Atkins).

What is not being said here is that scientific medicine has no place, for most certainly it does. The setting up of the AMA to purge the profession of charlatans and fraudulent pretenders started as a noble idea by men of commitment, but "absolute power corrupts absolutely. With centralized medical licensing and educational support came centralized forced compliance" (Culbert). Doctors, who subscribed to the allopathic theories could obtain a license to practice though the established orthodox schools, but once licensed they were not free to practice any other form of medicine, or the license would be revoked. This directive still exists today.

Medicine as a science has gradually evolved into a drug-industry oriented treatment philosophy and the (pharmaceutical) tail is now wagging the dog. Physicians who had once been open to any therapeutic system that appealed to a Rationalist's intellect now assumed that the only answer was/is pharmaceutical. The Pharmaceutical industry did not create allopathic medicine but did evolve out of the same philosophy - one of science seeking to eradicate disease from the helpless body. Its success has simply been one of shrewd business, for it is becoming overwhelmingly evident that its principles are not working.

Volumes have been written in recent years about what has been described as a scandal in medicine, and medical doctors themselves wrote most of these books. Those of us, who have followed this exposé, have had to overcome a great deal of anger with respect to the deliberate suppression of holistic medicine by very powerful systems at work. Yet I have come to believe that the truest way to make changes is not open revolt but by mere non-compliance and the quiet, personal affirmation that freedom of choice in medicine already exists. This clears the need we feel to ask for permission or for the nod of approval, which, if you think about it, only affirms that the one system presently in control of medicine actually holds that power.
Can the two systems of medicine work together? Quite fairly, not if one side denies the gifts of science and discovery, and the other ignores the wisdom of natural laws of universal order, which the body itself teaches us. Balance is a desired quality in all aspects of humanity, and in medicine this only can come through PERSONAL awareness and education. This call for personal awareness includes medical doctors but remember we cannot blame any one doctor for carrying out their training to the best of their ability. A respectable medical training has been the pinnacle of social pride for generations. Yet, it is true that some doctors question accepted doctrines easier than others. As family and community members, they are just as exposed to the influences of global changes in perception and paradigm shifts as are you and I? Also be clear that it is the user of any one system that ultimately sets up the strategy for its success or failure. It is important not to relinquish our power as if the only system of medicine we will ever have is the one we have now. Since Western Medicine is the only remaining science whereby Einstein's theories of wholism are still deferred by archaic Newtonian principles of the divided parts, we can expect with great optimism that it too will evolve.

(References: Health Revolution by Robert Atkins, MD; Health at the Cross Roads by Dean Black, Ph.D; Save Your Life by Michael Culbert, Celestine Prophecy by James Redfield, Vibrational Medicine - Gerber)