

THE INFINITESIMAL AND THE SIMILAR

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If a blacksmith scorches his hand, does he plunge it in ice water? He could, of course. But if he wants to get over the burn the quick and simple way, he will hold it as near to something hot as he can bear for as long as his patience holds out, and then withdraw it gradually.

If a carpenter hammers his thumb, does he swing it free in the air? Not if he wants prompt and simple relief without the black-and-blue and the swelling. He puts sustained pressure on the thumb that has just had sudden pressure, as hard as he can stand, for as long as his patience holds out, and then lets up on it gradually.

If a postman's feet are numb with cold, does he put them in hot water? Not if he knows what is good for chilled feet. He packs them in snow or cracked ice as cold as he can stand, for as long as he is good for, then withdraws them gradually.

In all three instances, the thing that cures is like (similar to) the thing that injured, only perhaps in a milder form. No one seems to quarrel with that. Yet when Dr. Charles Huggins and Dr. Jack D. McCarthy at the Ben May Laboratory for Cancer Research University of Chicago, observed that a chemical with a long name which will excite cancer in animals apparently cured one of six women extremely ill with cancer, a special Chicago dispatch to the *New York Times*, November 27, says they considered it an unexplained medical paradox.

In fact, according to their report, this is merely a new example of a general paradox. Almost every chemical used in ordinary medicine in treating cancer will, in large doses, "cause" cancer in animals. Not only chemicals, but, obviously, X-ray, too. What seems to astonish the two doctors is to see that the thing that cures is apparently like (similar to) the thing which they believe injured (that is, cancer), although

their life training had led them to expect an opposite, rather than a similar, to have that power.

But there were six women, only one of whom was apparently relieved. All were deemed beyond help "by conventional means" at the outset. Five had already lost ovaries or adrenal glands to surgery in former attempts to "halt" cancer. Tests at the laboratory showed that after injection by needle with the chemical (trimethylcholanthrene) none of the six had new growths. Two died of cancer, according to the report.

There is a law which postulates that a substance does one thing when applied to the human system in large doses, and does the opposite thing when given in tiny (infinitesimal) doses. Thus a chemical which in large amounts excites cancer in animals can, according to this law, abate cancer if used in extremely small amounts. This is nothing new. It may be that what astonishes Dr. Charles Huggins and Dr. Jack McCarthy falls under that law. If so then their chances for finding a specific that might be applied to all six of the women would be better among cancer-producing substances than among cancer-destroying. That is quite evidently what they were seeking. That generally is what the vast cancer researches, carried out at such enormous expense in technology and money, likewise seek.

They all begin, as these two doctors began, with cancer in the stage of morbid growth in tissue. Starting there, however, is not starting at the beginning. Before any of these six women had what the two doctors call cancer, a lot went on within them leading toward that desperate state. If the doctors had cared to inquire, they would have found that these were six distinct women with distinct personalities, distinct trends and susceptibilities, and distinct histories or paths of development, not merely six cases of cancer.

The problem of cancer, if that is indeed a legitimate problem at all, calls for scientific treatment through life, treatment that not merely alleviates or suppresses, but treatment that removes vital disorder within and enables the patient permanently to remain well. Through the course of life, that sort of treatment deals with practically unlimited varieties of

illness according as individuals vary in character and predisposition. If that sort of treatment is carried out scientifically and successfully, then the progression is toward health and strength and not toward degeneration, and cancer is seldom if ever seen at the end.

Still, when active cancer comes for the first time under thoroughly scientific medicine, it is not by any means hopeless, and the chances of good results are better than the one out of six recounted in the *Times*. If there is good vitality and a clear history, many a case is cured completely. If the pathology is far advanced and a lot of tissue destruction has already taken place, there may be enough vitality remaining to stop the spread of cancer and to contain what already exists; and such cases have been known to live full, useful, satisfying lives for decades and to meet their end, as healthier ends are met, in peaceful old age. If the case is already terminal, scientific medicine has the means of changing agony into peace. The view of the case must encompass more than the mere morbid cells of the local growth.

The remedies? They are legion. There is no such thing as a remedy for cancer; the remedy is for the person who is sick and has cancer as part of the symptom picture. As persons differ in health, they differ all the more sharply in sickness. To find the one remedy for the one individual sick person, the physician must understand thoroughly and completely his Law of Similars.

That gets back close to first principles, Dr. Huggins and Dr. McCarthy are startled to observe that a chemical which in large amounts will excite cancer in animals will in small amounts arrest cancer in a human. They are looking at morbid cell growth and not much beyond that, and they would like to find a way to stop it, assuming that just stopping it would be a good thing. Within their limited view, should they ever feel at home with the observation that startles them, they would be taking comfort in the Arndt-Schulz law, and the thing which arrests or allays can be so similar as to be identical, except in quantity, they might well suspect their new position to place them within Homœopathy's Law of Similars.

If the Arndt-Schulz law were the last word, there would be nothing to stop the two doctors from finding an actual specific for cancer, something they could apply to all six of the women and to all other instances of cancer, and nothing to prevent such a specific from being a cure. But the fact is that each of the six women was sick before there was a cancer to be seen, each woman in her own way, and the syndrome (symptom complex) called cancer was a result of that sickness. What went before, the sickness or disorder, from which morbid cell growth resulted—that is what will have to be cured in each woman. That is a separate and different job for each of the six and may not call for the same remedy in any two of them.

To appreciate that, we have to forget symptom complexes and remember sick individuals.

As the course over which each woman passes on her way downward in health toward ultimate cancer was an individual course peculiar to that one woman, it was no one agent that brought on the cancer in all six and hence no one remedy for them all. The one remedy that has the power to cure the one woman must be similar to the woman herself, not to the syndrome that she may exhibit in common with other women. This is what the Law of Similar means and this is why it works in all instances of curable illness, cancer, brain fever or shingles.

—*The Layman Speaks, Jan., '58.*