

Editorial

Protectionism and the Immune System

Harry van der Zee, MD



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When thinking about a topic for this first editorial in 2017 the first that came to mind was the state of shock, disbelief and bewilderment so many friends and colleagues around the world experienced ever since November 2016. A breath-taking blistering shock-and-awe start by the new U.S. president evaporated the slight hope that once in office it might all turn out not that bad. The opposite happened. The roller coaster of events is so erratic that between writing this editorial and its publication, things may have changed completely.

What are we witnessing? I wondered. What do we perceive as homeopaths? What came to mind were two words: *protectionism* and *immune system*. These two terms come together in the work of biologist and political philosopher Inge Mutsaers:

“The past few years can rightfully be called the “years of immunisation”: think of the spread of Ebola, bird flu, Islamic State (Isis) terror, or returning foreign rebel fighters from the Syrian Civil War: they are all “threats from outside” that threaten “us” (Western citizens). In Western society, we try to make ourselves *immune* to the threats posed by these issues. The horrific attack on the editorial office of *Charlie Hebdo* in January 2015, we are still nowhere near being immune. Yet, we continue to strive for it’.¹

Throughout Europe and elsewhere, a growing desire is visible for what could be called ‘radical purity’.¹

Mutsaers then mentions a variety of anti-Islamic parties and movements in Europe and if published a little later could have added the recent events in the United States. Banning foreigners, ‘the other’, considering Islamic culture as a contamination and based on that wanting to stop immigration is according to Mutsaers a primitive response. She decided to investigate what politics can learn from the immune system and the extent to which immunological concepts might be helpful in developing alternative perspectives for action.

‘How does one successfully design and adjust inhabitable immune spaces in a society of permeable walls? For Sloterdijk [German philosopher and cultural theorist], the quintessential question is how we can become a world society where the immunity of the one is no longer achieved at the expense of the other?’ ... ‘According Sloterdijk, we must leave behind all former distinctions between self and other and all separations between friend and enemy. The question remains: how do we do that?’ ... ‘The existing political entities still have a familial, tribal, national, regional and imperial

nature. These systems are still in competition and the immunity profits of one are still seen as detrimental to the other ... [so there] is no all-encompassing (global) immune system and accordingly no all-encompassing solidarity’.¹

Excessive immunisation measures lead to autoimmunity, which for example is seen in the sharp division in Western societies leading to extremism directed to members of the same society that have a different world view. A strong anti-other attitude of a society actually destroys the very fabric of that society, as those who do not agree are ostracised as well and those who do so demonised. What starts as an attempt of protection turns into self-destruction.

Mutsaers argues for a more versatile and less defensive immunological repertoire, which allows for the development of alternative and less polarised forms of political debate.

As homeopaths we know that disease is cure and that the current chaos can be seen as an attempt of the collective vital force to restore harmony. If the healing crisis is allowed to follow its natural course, harmony would indeed be restored, be it at a higher level of organization, ultimately one that includes the totality of humanity and its enormous variety of cultures.

In homeopathic practices, we increasingly see cases of compromised immunity, of immune systems mistuned by the ‘fake news’ of immunization—the reality of which is denied by the presentation of ‘alternative facts’—, as also increasing numbers of cases with autoimmune diseases. The collective vital force, the collective immune system seems to be deranged to the extent that in order to cast the disharmony off a major crisis is to be expected. There is and will be work to do for homeopaths.

“People were created to be loved.

Things were created to be used.

The reason why the world is in chaos is

because things are being loved

and people are being used (Dalai Lama).”²

References

- 1 Mutsaers Inge. Immunological Discourse in Political Philosophy – Immunisation and Its Discontents. Routledge Oxford; 2016
- 2 Lama Dalai. Quotes. Available at: https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/d/dalai_lama.html. Accessed February 5, 2017

Address for correspondence
Harry van der Zee, MD,
(e-mail: journal@homeolinks.nl).

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