



INTRODUCTION

THE GERM OF AN IDEA

The real beginning for me, the initial seed of an idea for this book, bizarrely came from a tree. I am sure I have a pretty average knowledge of trees amongst a generation of other city-dwellers. I can recognise some trees, but very few of them. I know they grow leaves in the spring, which fall off in the autumn, although I know some trees keep their leaves all year round. I know I really love standing next to big trees, and for some reason I always find myself gravitating towards them whilst in the local park. I like trees, but besides climbing them as a child I don't think I have ever thought much about them. Until that day. The day that someone, for whom I had great respect, casually told me to go and touch a tree as it would improve my health.

Well, you can imagine my look of complete incredulity. It was probably one of the most ridiculous suggestions I think anyone had ever made to me – that I should go to the park, stand next to a tree and touch it. Just the thought of it was ridiculous. I am sure I had touched trees before, certainly whilst climbing them as a child, but I couldn't remember noticing any physical effect it had on me, either positively or negatively. You can understand therefore that I had no intention whatsoever of complying with my friend's wishes and being made to look an idiot in the park, leaning against a tree, getting better. I mean, for how long would I have to do it – one minute, twenty minutes, God forbid an hour? And which tree would I touch? A big one, a little one? He hadn't given me an instruction manual.

It came as no surprise to me that I didn't take him up on his idea, but what did surprise me enormously, however, was that my nineteen-year-old son took up his suggestion. Watching the result of him touching a tree completely changed my opinion and in fact

opened my eyes to a whole new world. I mean, if a tree can affect us, what does that mean? The implications seemed to be huge – so much so that I wanted to investigate further and see what scientific evidence might lie behind this.

But I have moved on too quickly, without telling you what happened to my son that fateful day. To cut a very long story short, my son was suffering from severe chronic fatigue. Up until the point he became ill, he had been a straight A student who loved playing football. As a parent, you try all of the accepted medical routes, which in the case of chronic fatigue are very limited, most avenues taking you to psychiatrists. But as both my brother and my father are Professors of psychiatry, I knew there was no solution there – chronic fatigue is a physical problem, not a mental one. So what did we have to lose when we turned to “quackery science” as a method of treatment?

We were forced into this position when we were told by the doctors and complementary medical practitioners that they had run out of options and there was nothing more that could be done. It was my wife who suggested we try even the “crazy” ideas, for what did we have to lose? I remember that discussion vividly. We were sitting at our kitchen table feeling incredibly depressed when I turned to my friend sitting next to me and said, “Look how low we have sunk – we are actually going to try the services of a healer.”

Now one point I have to make is this: women seem to be much more open to taking on new ideas than men. I am not sure I would have been brave enough to seek out the help of extreme alternative ideas, but it seems that women are much more likely to do so. Well done them! Anyway, whatever weird and wonderful things the healer, Lloyd Geddes, did are not relevant to this book, as the main thing to know is my son got better and was cured by Lloyd within six months. Three months into his treatment with Lloyd, my son

became well enough to begin talking to us on the telephone. At this stage, though, we could still not be in the same room as him as it drained his energy levels too much. So we thought it would be a good idea to rent a cottage in the Norfolk countryside for a week, where he could sit outside in the garden (we don't have a garden at our flat in London), which might help his recuperation.

You have probably guessed by now that there was a tree in the garden. Just an ordinary old tree. It didn't look particularly interesting to me. But one morning I saw my son, dressed in just his dressing gown, go up to the tree and touch it. We had both been present when Lloyd had told us that there are benefits from touching trees, but it seems that my son was the only one who thought there was something in it. So I watched him for five minutes or so from the small kitchen window in the rented cottage, and then he suddenly stopped and walked back to the house; it was all over.

At this point, although the two of us were together in the rented cottage, he still was not well enough to talk to me, so I was not able at the time to ask him, firstly why he had done it, and then, once he had done it, whether there had been any effect on him. During that week, I only observed him doing it once; he never went back to the tree, or even near it again. Oh well, I thought, there is nothing in that idea, then. But how wrong I was.

It was in fact not until a month or two later, when he had got well enough to begin speaking to us, that I mentioned the time when we were away and I saw him touching the tree. I asked him about it, and he told me that he had to stop touching the tree that one time as it had literally made him feel physically sick. Now, to me, previously, I probably would normally have dismissed this as psychological stuff, it must have been all in his head, but the one nagging doubt was this simple fact. The only part of the healer's treatment that made my son feel sick was when he treated his liver, and this he tried to

do as little as possible during his recovery; however, occasionally he "pinged" his liver, causing sickness sensations. So I thought, could a big tree really "ping" his liver in the same way the healer did? Was it really possible that a tree could in any way affect our physical well-being? I had to know more, and Lady Luck was on my side.

Lady Luck in this case was the fact that I live very near to the biggest library in the world, the British Library. It is a mere ten minutes' walk from my home. As I had become the permanent carer for my son, I had given up full-time employment, which meant I had plenty of time to pop into the library as often as I wanted to. It didn't take long to discover the fact there was nothing seriously written on "tree-hugging". It appeared to be just an idea that came from the 1960s and was associated with the use of LSD. When people took the drug, it seemed to stimulate something within their brain that allowed them to see lots of different colours emanating from the trees and plants, but pretty much that was all. So I started looking elsewhere in the library, searching with strange queries to see what would turn up, to see if maybe there were in fact studies on trees and their behaviour that could be relevant to my enquiries.

To say that my journey of research took me to places that I did not know existed is an understatement, as you will discover in the following chapters. As my journey unfolded, I made one fundamental rule – that all of my ideas must come from medical and scientific studies, not from opinion or hearsay but from proper studies. This was not a problem as there were millions of available research documents for me to choose from, and reading the bibliography of one article would always lead me onto further ideas. However, I have not made any judgements on any particular experiment, as scientists seem to do. I have not said that the size of the trial was too small to be of value. I take the opinion that if an experiment took place and ten people out of ten were cured, then

that experiment worked; I don't think that the research should be dismissed because only ten people took part in it. Also, I have not dismissed research conducted more than twenty or thirty years or so ago, as often happens. In fact, all I require is that the work has been conducted by a scientist in the field of research, and that it has subsequently been published.

What I have found most unusual, however, is how biased Western ideas are against others from different cultures. Why should Western scientists have a monopoly on the truth: a study done in Russia by trained scientists in the 1970s should be just as acceptable as similar studies in the West. But it is very sad to report that, as you read this book, it will become obvious that this is not the case amongst research scientists. Most of the authoritative work conducted by Nobel prize-winning physicists in Russia into the effect of electromagnetic fields on the human body has been completely dismissed as incorrect and has been ignored. Only in Russia did they ban the microwave cooker when it first came out. What did they know that we don't? If it's going to affect my health, I feel I have a right to know.

One of the greatest disappointments, I believe, is the lack of progress that has been made in scientific attitudes over the last hundred years. In researching this book, I expected that science would operate on the basis of change, one piece of science helping to build up another piece of science so that each bit led to an advancement of knowledge along the road. But in many cases this is not what happens. In fact, I have read scientific papers written in the past few years that replicate papers written fifty years ago. Why would this be necessary? Why repeat the same research?

To give a simple example, a lot of people currently believe that some forms of cancer, such as pancreatic cancer, are in fact viruses. In order to cure the cancer, one form of treatment suggests that

if you can calculate the frequency of the virus, you can blast it out of existence by hitting it with the same frequency – the virus will literally explode and disappear. This is in fact not a new idea but a very old one, discovered in 1935, but it highlights what I have found out whilst researching this book – that there are many major discoveries that have been completely ignored and passed over. Only today, in 2011, have scientists started treating pancreatic cancer by using ultrasound waves, harnessing a vibration to destroy the cancerous cells, the very same principle that was discovered nearly eighty years ago. If only scientists had not been restricted by dogma, ego and politics, we might already have had cures for specific cancers and many lives could have been saved.

The best way to understand why this happens is to analyse the industry of science as a whole, to see how research is funded, who receives funding and how topics for research are chosen. We also need to examine which scientific papers are published, who are the people who peer review them and what are the effects of the research once the paper has been circulated and read. In order to understand the scientific community, we might best adopt the expression that power stays in the hands of the few. Why else would revolutionary cures for cancer have been ignored for seventy years, or methods to increase crop production by the use of magnetic and sound waves been dismissed as nonsense?

The last great medically trained man who actually stood against the establishment was Culpeper, who lived as long ago as 1616–1674. No-one since then has really stood up against the medical profession. His story makes fascinating reading. He had to challenge the establishment whose members attempted to block his knowledge being spread freely to the poor who could not afford to pay doctors' fees. He was the Robin Hood of the medical establishment, translating Latin text into plain English and showing

people how they could go into the woods and pick flowers that would cure them. This was a free alternative to visiting a doctor, which provided the same service but in Latin terminology. In one of his many comments, Culpeper wrote:

“This not being pleasing, and less profitable to me, I consulted with my two brothers, DR. REASON and DR. EXPERIENCE, and took a voyage to visit my mother NATURE, by whose advice, together with the help of Dr. DILIGENCE, I at last obtained my desire; and, being warned by MR. HONESTY, a stranger in our days, to publish it to the world, I have done it”.

The book in question was called *The English Physician*, and it was brought into life because of what Culpeper thought of as the unfair medical establishment. Culpeper had been apprenticed as a doctor but, due to his mentor running away with his money, he was not able to finish his studies to become a doctor. In the context of medical politics of the time, Culpeper decided he would not continue with his studies but would set up in opposition to the medical establishment, which he felt charged an unfair amount for its services.

At this time, in order to become a doctor, it was necessary to learn Latin. All of the medicines were catalogued using their Latin definition rather than their English one. In order to be prescribed the correct medicine, it was necessary to obtain its Latin name, which was not accessible to lay people at the time. Culpeper felt that this was an injustice and took it upon himself to write a book containing no Latin, so that it would be possible for the commoner to treat himself independently. But, more importantly, Culpeper chose to fill his book solely with herbal medicines that were easily available locally, so that it was no longer necessary to go to the doctor and pay lots of money for treatment. It was now possible to go out

into the gardens or woods and just pick the herbs that satisfied your illness. Culpeper has been called “The first herbalist”, which for most people in India, Asia, Africa, South America and parts of North America would surely be insulting, as they have followed a herbally based medicine since many thousands of years prior to the publication of Culpeper’s book.

Sadly, Culpeper’s ideas seem to have been overshadowed by the modern-day drug industry. I am not sure why, but when I walk past a Chinese medicine shop, I am very dismissive of the notion that anything sold within it could make me better. I have the same impulse when I walk past all herbalist shops – I would never entertain the idea of going inside and purchasing any of their herbs. What has made me think this way? Why do I think that a herb could not function as well as a drug created by Western pharmaceutical companies? I think it is because I have been brought up to believe from the media that Western science is superior, that you should always trust your doctor and the drug industry as they are there for your best interests. How blinded I am!

I feel sure that most people who are reading this would not dream of using a herbalist. If you asked people in the street who they would prefer to be treated by, a herbalist or a doctor, most people would say a doctor. But what they don’t realise is that the job of a doctor is to prescribe drugs, drugs that have mostly originated from plants. Two historically very popular drugs – aspirin and quinine (an antimalarial agent) – come from the bark of a tree. In fact most drug companies today are looking to plants for new discoveries of the next generation of medicines that they hope will cure illnesses. If drug companies had consulted ancient herbalist books years ago, they would have discovered very quickly that a good many answers were already there. The problem for the drug companies is how to synthesise the chemical in the plant so that it can be reproduced in

tablet form. There is no profit recommending that patients just take samples directly from the plant even though they are aware it might have curative properties.

One example that I came across to emphasise this point is a plant called Quebra Pedra (*Phyllanthus niruri*) or “stone blaster”. This plant has been tested in a scientific experiment and been shown to cure gall stones in 95% of patients. You would assume, therefore, that doctors would recommend this to patients suffering from gall stones, as just taking this herb in tea can get rid of gall stones within two weeks. But sadly this is not the case; doctors prefer that the patient either takes drugs that are not always effective or, more commonly, has an operation to remove the stones. This is neither sensible treatment nor clever economics.

So why are there not herbalists in every high street selling plants of all descriptions to combat illnesses? Why is it only recently that we have been able to buy herbal supplements in specialist shops? There are now more and more Chinese herbalists in most major towns and cities, but their products are based on Chinese rather than English herbal medicine. The plants and trees available to the Chinese are quite different from those available in Europe, but why are there not many English herbalist shops, in this their native country?

The idea that herbs grown in the wild could make you well was a readily accepted part of life not that long ago. For many millions of people living throughout the world, this is still the case, but in Western medicine the idea that herbs are the solution to illnesses is constantly ridiculed. This is ironic since most drugs are chemically derived from plants, the very ones that Culpeper was referring back in 1652.

Before writing this book, I never at any time felt that my rejection of herbalism and my faith in pharmaceuticals was wrong.

Why would I question everything that I had been led to believe was true? Western medicine, with its double-blind studies and its peer-reviewed papers, was obviously the best way for science to progress, and only truth and good science would come out of it. Sadly, this is not what I have found to be the case. Yes, lots of good science has been developed, but so has lots of bad science, with years and years having been wasted on repeated studies and wasted opportunities. I hate to say it, but millions of people’s lives could have been saved if scientists had been open to new ideas and had not closed ranks, just as they did back in 1652.

In my research for this book, I have read hundreds upon hundreds of papers on science. As I said above, one recurring theme seems to be that today’s scientific papers rarely give much credence to scientific studies that were conducted more than thirty years ago. This might be due to access, as it is often hard to get hold of a published paper that is out of print or a book that is hard to find. It is mostly only papers that have been published in the last twenty years that have been put online. If you are a scientist who is looking to develop a new area of research and wants to investigate whether a similar line of enquiry has been developed before, all of your research would take place online unless you had access to a great library. This would significantly restrict your level of research, and you would not know if the study had previously been conducted. I also believe that it is common practice not to look at studies that were conducted more than forty years ago in the belief that if it was important, it would be common knowledge in textbooks today. This is a misguided point, as I have discovered a great deal of lost science in books written as long ago as 1910 that seems to have been completely forgotten.

Another current problem in research is that science has become incredibly specialised. Scientists develop research in their

specialist areas, attend conferences within this line of work and read magazines that concentrate on their subject, and this then becomes more and more a niche area of research. Very rarely can you discover a completely different part of science crossing over and awakening new ideas in other specialised areas. I have not seen any scientific paper on animals that refers to the biology of plants or vice versa, which is a tragedy, as you will discover in later chapters. Chemists and physicists are not good bedfellows, and neither are biologists and biochemists, but they should be. Out of all academics in science-based subjects, physicists appear to be more open to change than other disciplines. This is not the case in biochemistry or medicine, where ideas that are over a hundred years old have only just been accepted into Western medical practice.

An example of this is the discovery that electrical stimulation of bones helps them to heal, which was originally discovered in 1812 by Dr John Birch of St Thomas' Hospital, London, using electric shocks to help heal a non-union of the tibia bone. This discovery was again reported in 1860 by Dr Arthur Garratt of Boston, who stated in his electrotherapy textbook that in the few times he had needed to try it, this method never failed. Electrical treatment was not, however, put to modern use until the 1980s, and today it is still not completely accepted and used as a primary treatment. Two hundred years have elapsed since this technique was first discovered, so what else might have gone unnoticed?

One book I have read, *The Body Electric* by Dr Robert Becker, an American orthopaedic surgeon, contains so much useful information on the general state of the science that I am going to quote verbatim the final paragraph in his book of 347 pages, which is packed full of medical data and scientific experiments about regeneration and the use of electrical stimulation. It is a book that makes you sit up and take notice of some fascinating and ground-

breaking experiments that Dr Becker conducted into the possibility that our bodies could self-generate to repair damaged tissue just like the salamander, which can regrow its limbs if they are cut off. The science Becker conducted should have paved the way for major breakthroughs in the development of science and by now have made available the facility to repair damaged heart tissue by the simple use of electromagnetic forces. This, however, is his depressing conclusion:

"I've taken the trouble to recount my experience in detail for two reasons. Obviously, I want to tell people about it because it makes me furious. More importantly, I want the general public to know that science isn't run the way they have read about it in the newspapers and magazines; I want lay people to understand that they cannot automatically accept scientists' pronouncements at face value, for too often they're self-serving and misleading. I want our citizens, non-scientists as well as investigators, to work to change the way research is administered. The way it's currently funded and evaluated, we're learning more and more about less and less, and science is becoming our enemy instead of our friend".

This extract was written in 1985, and as far as I can make out very little has changed. In his introduction to the book, Dr Becker explains that his primary target is the biochemistry industry, which he feels has thwarted the development of alternative ideas. If the techniques do not fit the chemical concepts – even if they do seem to work – they will be abandoned as pseudo-scientific or downright fraudulent. If you want to find a textbook example of this, all you have to do is look at the homeopathic industry, which appears to work but is based upon chemistry that makes no sense

to the biochemist. I will show in later chapters that the scientific principles behind homeopathic medicine have been completely misunderstood, both by traditional and homeopathic scientists.

A good example of an area of science that needs to be reassessed is seasonal affective disorder (SAD), in which sufferers experience symptoms of depression at different times of the year. I don't know about you, but I am fully aware that I am not as happy on miserable cloudy days as I am on glorious sunny ones – a very common and obvious reaction. When the sky is darker, and less light is reaching us, I would guess that most people feel more depressed. But are we in fact clinically depressed or just feeling a bit low, a bit sorry for ourselves? And if so, why? What is happening on these cloudy days to change our emotions?

The answer is so obvious that it should be common knowledge, but the failings of science to understand this simple phenomenon lie at the very heart of the book. What is light if not energy, and what does our body need to sustain itself – energy? Traditional science suggests that we get our energy only from our food, but this seems patently wrong. Does it not seem absurd to assume that our bodies would not help themselves to free energy? I would argue that our bodies clearly recognise this and have been developed so that we can absorb energy from light. Plants do this and, as you will see in later chapters, if plants do it, it is likely that animals and humans do it too.

How can we prove this simple idea? I would suggest that we could simply go to a doctor and get our energy levels checked. But hold on a minute, there is no medical test for our body's energy levels – if you went to your doctor, they would just look at you blankly when you requested an energy test. Science, it appears, seems to have ignored this whole area of research. So until science catches up with common sense, SAD research will be left up to psychiatrists, who

are looking for the answers in completely the wrong place.

We know a lot about medical biology, such as about the genetic code, the nervous system, the blood, muscle movement, respiration and other observational aspects of biology. But we understand virtually nothing about hunger, thirst, sleep, growth and healing. We know nothing about the way our body regulates its metabolic activity in cycles with that of the Earth, moon and sun. And we understand virtually nothing about consciousness, choices, memory, emotions, creativity, learning and personality. Mechanistic chemistry will never have answers to these issues, so we must develop other sciences that help us to understand them – but as long as we remain fixated with biochemistry, we will never find answers to all of these issues.

We are at the moment in a scientific cul-de-sac. Scientists have been giving us snippets of knowledge that do not add up to provide us with a complete visual picture of how things are and how things interact. We are stuck. We need to take a step back and free our minds from what we have been told. We need to look at the science around us to get a picture that is whole and complete. To liberate our instincts, we need to use our own common sense. We need to go back to the beginning because we have to unravel what we think we already know and then build on that knowledge and see life afresh.