

Subject: revised T/168 talk at Berlin RKI RKI 10/20/01

revised 10/19

I am deeply grateful to our hosts for this opportunity to talk about the evolutionary aspects of infectious disease. But it is impossible for me to erase what has been on my mind since September 11, unforgettable images of the collapse of the WTC within the line of sight from my own home in NYC. Since then, we have the further calamity of the inversion of medical science, of the use of cultivated microbes to kill. But I come here not to unload my anguish, but to return to our scientific agenda.

On the positive side, we have the example of Emil von Behring himself, the scientific hero we honor today, and the foundations he laid for the scientific development and use of prophylactic vaccines. One hope I do see for global civility is organization in a really serious way, for the application of the most advanced technology towards the control of the world's most grievous infections, tuberculosis, malaria, HIV and several others. The altruism that would reflect would in fact enhance our personal security, and would even at enlarged scale entail investments a tiny fraction of what is lost from terrorist attacks and the indispensable military responses to them.

Well let me turn now to my narrower topic, the natural history of our relationship to pathogenic microbes, or more broadly to our microbiomes -- the entire ensemble of microflora which share our body space, for better and for worse.

disaese. As we shall see, this military metaphor may have a secondary consequence, what I call an attitude problem, which may obscure a broader biological perspective. [Recall Koch's monomorphism, and its denial of Darwinian evolution].

.. 20th C. Life expectancy -- US -- would like European if accessible. Prussia probably better off in 1900 a/c Bismarck reforms..

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Above revision after vehement non-response to press clamoring for comment on BW.