

Homeopathy—Part 3

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One Disease, One Remedy

The eighth flaw of Hahnemann was to assume that regardless of the symptoms a person has, there is only one underlying illness having only one proper cure. Classical homeopathy teaches that any and all symptoms are only reflections of a single underlying “energy” disease. Because they are reflections of only one particular disease, they require only one particular medicine. It is the homeopath’s job to determine this one, and only one, medicine which most closely corresponds to the one disease with its given set of symptoms. “The use of a single medicine at a time is a basic principle of classic homeopathy. Thus,... although a person may have numerous physical and psychological symptoms, he or she has only one disease....”¹

Traditional homeopaths believe that only one medicine should be given at a time; to violate this principle is to bring damage to the patient. But many modern homeopaths ignore this principle and prescribe whatever they think is needed. Regardless,

...the homeopathic physician is trained to spot the one medicine, or the group of complementary medicines, out of the two thousand-odd substances in the homeopathic pharmacopoeia, which the patient before him needs. He will make regular use of perhaps eight hundred different medicines in his day-to-day practice.²

In essence, the eight flaws [see also previous articles] of Hahnemann explain our distrust of homeopathy. They also underscore the problems faced by modern homeopaths. How can they justify a procedure based upon a flawed approach to medical practice?

But to conclude this section, let us cite just one illustration of the difficulty Hahnemann’s theories present to the modern homeopath, and the consequences of such difficulty.

Homeopathy believes that because the true disease is spiritual and not physical, the entire organism is affected, physical and mental. Therefore mental symptoms or problems may be as significant or even more significant than physical symptoms in diagnosing the true disease: “Homeopathic physicians since Hahnemann’s time have made further study of the different grades of symptoms and of their relative importance. They have found that mental symptoms when well defined, are usually the most useful [in diagnosis].”³

Further, the homeopathic diagnosis is contrary to that of the physician practicing scientific medicine. The homeopath does not look for symptoms which are common to all men that would assist the diagnostic process. For example, he does not look for symptoms such as coughing, temperature, runny nose, and sneezing that could indicate a cold or flu.

The homeopath takes an opposite approach and looks for absolutely unique symptoms that are not found in any other person. This is why he must examine and question the client so

thoroughly. It is only in this manner he thinks he can make an effective diagnosis.

The homeopath examines (1) the mental symptoms, (2) the general symptoms, and (3) the particular physiological symptoms. “In all three of these categories the symptoms which are absolutely dominant are the ‘strange, rare, and peculiar’ symptoms which qualify the given patient and distinguish him from all others with similar mental, general, or particular symptoms.”⁴ Thus, the homeopath does not look for symptoms the patient has that are common to known illness but “those which *distinguish and differentiate*” the patient “from any other patient in the world with a similar complaint”!⁵

This is why the homeopathic exam can be extremely time consuming. Because illness and disease are not primarily physical, to treat them in such a manner is wrong, misleading, and harmful. The true “spirit” illness is what produces the outward symptoms of disease, whether physical or mental in nature. Thus, only by exhaustive analysis of the physical, mental, and emotional *symptoms* can the root disease be determined so it may then be properly treated. Thus, “most [root] disorders or diseases... produce symptoms which are emotional, mental, and/or physical in nature...”⁶

Because both emotional and physical “symptoms” of an illness are diagnosed, the homeopath must determine the emotional and physical “condition” of a patient. As we saw, questions must be asked on the basis of patient likes and dislikes in various areas, such as food, his relationship to the weather and environment, and many other things a normal physician would never consider as having any relationship to an illness or disease.

But Hahnemann was adamant about this approach and so are modern homeopaths. Without detailed questioning, the totality of the symptoms and a whole picture of the disease cannot be accomplished.⁷ Dr. Harris Coulter states:

The alterations in the vital force are to be perceived only by a most careful and exhaustive analysis of symptoms.... Thus the homeopath must record a long list of symptoms, including many which would be ignored by the orthodox physician. He must pay special attention to the “modalities”: is the particular symptom aggravated or relieved by heat, cold, motion, rest, noise, quiet, wetness, dryness, and changes in the weather;... These changes in the symptoms produced by different environmental conditions are often the key to the correct medicine.⁸

And what are the consequences to such an exhaustive procedure of symptomatology? As we will see, this draining and subjective approach to examination leads many homeopaths into psychic means of diagnosis in order to save time. Furthermore, it also proves that homeopathic diagnosis is a myth.

Contradictory Theory and Practice

It goes without saying that any false system of medicine that has existed as long as homeopathy will have generated its share of confusion and contradiction. Thus, as a whole, homeopathy operates on contrary principles and offers contradictory treatments.

Homeopathic Categories

We have divided practitioners of homeopathy into three basic categories: (1) the traditional homoeopathist who largely follows the unscientific and potentially occultic theories of the founder of homeopathy, Samuel Hahnemann; (2) the scientifically and/or parapsychological oriented homeopath who attempts to bring homeopathy into the twentieth century, including, however, the suspect practice of “infinitely” diluting its medications; and (3) the “demythologized” homeopathist who thinks homeopathic medicines may work by unknown principles but ques-

tions that homeopathic medicines can be effective in dilutions so high that none of the original medicine remains. The first category, the traditionalist, stands in contrast to the second and third categories which reflect more of a modern approach to homeopathy. However, both categories one and two stand in contrast to category three in their more occultic approach.⁹

The traditional homeopath generally follows the teachings and philosophy of Samuel Hahnemann, offering the least amount of revision, if any, in light of modern scientific knowledge. This group almost blindly accepts all or most of Hahnemann's ideas and is the most overtly reactionary, anachronistic, and perhaps occultic among the three. They readily prescribe homeopathic medicines in such high dilutions that not a single molecule of the original substance remains. They believe that the homeopathic practice of repetitive shaking and diluting the substance somehow energizes it to become an effective medicine. They may employ astrology, radionics devices, pendulums, or spiritistic revelations in their work.

The second category is comprised of both scientifically oriented homeopaths and parapsychologically oriented practitioners. The scientific homeopath usually operates in conjunction with scientific medicine and believes that homeopathy works on the basis of physical principles that have not yet been discovered. This group thinks science will one day prove the truth and efficacy of homeopathy.

In France, there are some three thousand M.D.'s who use homeopathy; many of them think its "effectiveness" is caused by some material reaction in the body not yet scientifically understood. They do not necessarily accept the idea of immaterial, mystical forces or spiritual energies. Boiron Laboratories, the major homeopathic pharmaceutical in France, allocates four to five percent of its profits (of \$150 million in global sales yearly) to research for discovering the supposed scientific mechanism behind homeopathy.¹⁰

This group is embarrassed by the many false theories of Hahnemann that continue to be accepted by homeopaths. These practitioners are attempting to bring new support to homeopathy based on scientific medicine and modern scientific theories such as those in quantum physics.

But the approach based on supposed parallels to the phenomena of quantum mechanics is suspect at best, and plain wrong in many formulations.¹¹ For example, neither the actions of sub-atomic particles nor their observed paradoxes are applicable to the homeopathic claim that infinite dilutions of a substance somehow produce extremely powerful medicines.

The scientific approach of this practitioner is sometimes legitimate, but it is also sometimes compromised by the other "scientific" homeopath, the parapsychological practitioner. The parapsychological homeopath combines scientific research with occultic practices or principles. This group often employs such things as divinatory pendulums and occultic radionic devices in their attempt to lend "scientific" credibility to homeopathy. They, too, may accept astrology or spiritistic revelations. They are little different from the modern parapsychologist in general who attempts to use scientific methods and experiments in order to investigate clearly occultic phenomena.

But even in the category of scientific homeopath, problems remain in the classification of their practices. Many of them maintain that homeopathy is only effective in such high dilutions that not a single molecule of the homeopathic medicine remains. This raises the issue of how scientific such practitioners really are.

Dr. Desmichelle, an M.D. and honorary president of the Centre Homeopathique de France, states his conviction that "The homeopathic remedy, to be efficient, has to be given in extremely

low dosage. The more diluted the active principle, the more powerful the remedy.”¹² But what is the “active principle” when not a molecule remains? Homeopaths can’t say.

Further, even when homeopathic M.D.’s use *both* homeopathy and scientific medicine, the two categories of practice remain distinct and separate. No truly scientific homeopath ever maintains that homeopathy is the practice of scientific medicine; he only maintains a faith that someday, somehow, science will finally discover its alleged workings and then homeopathy will become an accepted part of scientific medicine. But whether such faith is ever justified is clearly open to question.

The third category, the modern “demythologized” homeopath, usually does not prescribe the “infinitely” diluted homeopathic medications nor do they attempt to “cosmically energize” them. These homeopaths are fundamentally pragmatists; they are less concerned about philosophical backgrounds or scientific proof and are attracted to homeopathy because of its “natural” approach to medicine. They believe that homeopathic treatments in the lower potencies (6X-12X) have a legitimate physical, curative effect, probably on the immune system, even though no such effect has ever been scientifically demonstrated. They employ homeopathy primarily because it works and they are not necessarily concerned why.

Despite their differences, the above three categories of homeopathist share two common themes. Neither of the three is, strictly, operating under the principles of scientific medicine, and all of them may potentially be dangerous to one’s health and/or involve one in the occult.

Notes:

¹ Dana Ullman, Stephen Cummings, “The Science of Homeopathy,” *New Realities*, Summer, 1985, p. 19.

² David S. Sobel, ed., *Ways of Health: Wholistic Approaches to Ancient and Contemporary Medicine* (New York, NY: Harcourt Brace Jovanich, 1979), pp. 303-304.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 301-302.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 302.

⁵ Harris L. Coulter, “Homeopathy,” in Leslie J. Kaslof, *Wholistic Dimensions in Healing: A Resource Guide* (Garden City, NY: Dolphin/Doubleday, 1978), p. 48.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

⁷ Samuel Hahnemann, *Organon of Medicine*, 6th edition, reprint (New Dehli, India: B. Jain Publishers, 1978), pp. 172-186.

⁸ Sobel, ed., *Ways of Health*, pp. 295-296.

⁹ These categories are for purposes of general contrast; the descriptions given do not necessarily apply to every practitioner.

¹⁰ Letter from Annick Sullivan with a copy of personal testimony re: the benefits of homeopathy, p. 2; Mary Carpenter, “Homeopathic Chic,” *Health*, March, 1989, p. 53.

¹¹ Cf., Douglas Stalker, Clark Glymour, eds., “Quantum Medicine,” in *Examining Holistic Medicine* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1985), pp. 107-125.

¹² Translation from French of an interview with Dr. Desmichelle, M.D., *Elle Magazine*, April, 1988, p. 2.