

Homeopathy—Part 4

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Previously, we detailed three categories of homeopathic practitioners:

- (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 questions that homeopathic medicines can be effective in dilutions so high that none of the original medicine remains.¹

The Nature of the Disagreement

These categories reveal why the homeopathic community is so divided: they cannot agree on either the theoretical basis of homeopathy or its practical application.

To understand how serious this is, imagine the modern medical community vociferously arguing over the nature of a disease, its cause, its symptoms, and the proper remedy. No one outside the profession could possibly know what to believe or the proper method of treatment when the profession itself remained in the dark.

Traditional homeopaths feel that “modern” revisionists have betrayed their tradition and have offered sharp criticism, maintaining they are “pseudo-homeopaths” and “charlatans.” (We tend to agree; because of its premises, homeopathy cannot be so radically compromised without destroying its nature.) In essence, a true homeopath is a Hahnemannian purist; modernists are only engaging in speculations and largely futile research endeavors by attempting to force homeopathy to become what it can never be: scientific medicine. They are muddying the waters and producing confusion over what real medicine is and is not.

To these pure Hahnemannian homeopaths, the scientifically oriented and/or “low dose” homeopaths are essentially heretics performing a travesty upon true homeopathy; they cannot be true homeopaths.² Further, by their low doses and/or multiple remedies, they are aggravating an illness, not curing it. This is why “Hahnemann viewed these hybrids as ‘worse than allopaths... amphibians... still creeping in the mud of the allopathic marsh... who only rarely venture to raise their heads in freedom toward the ethereal truth.’”³

Perhaps an illustration will help us understand the issue involved here. A true Christian is a biblical purist; he accepts the Bible’s claim to be the literal word of God and therefore authoritative over his life. Because basic Bible doctrines can objectively be established through accepted

hermeneutical principles, modern, liberal, and cultic revisions of Biblical teaching simply do not have the right to the name Christian. Their mere claim to be Christian cannot alter the fact that they deny and reject fundamental biblical doctrines.

But right or wrong, the true principles of homeopathy are Hahnemannian; to violate those principles is to violate homeopathy. This is why even Dr. Grossinger concludes, “These events prove that Hahnemann was right when he denied the possibility of half-homeopathy. Half-homeopathy is nonhomeopathy.”⁴

Nevertheless, all this reveals why homeopathy will never agree on even fundamental issues; the divisions in theory and practice are far too deep and unmanageable.

If classical practitioners reject modern heretics, modern “homeopaths” think the traditionalists are ignorant and deceived.

The traditional homeopath is perfectly comfortable with the following statement made by the leading homeopathist at the turn of the century, James Tyler Kent, M.D., a statement which makes the more modern homeopath cringe: “There is no disease that exists of which the cause is known to man by the eye or by the microscope. Causes are infinitely too fine to be observed by any instrument of precision.”⁵

Significantly, Hahnemann was his own worst enemy. It was the extremely bizarre nature of his theories which caused the divisions and confusions among his own followers. For example, Hahnemann claimed that it took him twelve long and arduous years of diligent research and study to discover the major cause of almost all human disease. He claimed that seven-eighths of all disease including things like cancer, asthma, paralysis, deafness, madness, and epilepsy was directly attributed to *psora*, in less refined terms, *itch*.

According to Hahnemann’s *Organon*, this “psora, [is] the only real *fundamental cause* and producer of all the other... innumerable forms of disease.”⁶

But “a large majority” of Hahnemann’s own followers refused to accept the idea and, according to Wolff, a leading homeopath and contemporary of Hahnemann, it “has met with the greatest opposition from Homeopathic physicians themselves.”⁷ (In his 1842 critical lectures on homeopathy, Oliver Wendell Holmes referred to it as “an almost insane conception, which I am glad to get rid of.”⁸)

But homeopaths have always been at each other’s throats, so to speak. For example, in 1900 in James Tyler Kent’s *Lectures on Homeopathic Philosophy*, a commentary on Hahnemann’s *Organon*, he observes that even though homeopathy was extensively distributed throughout the world, its own doctrines were perverted and polluted primarily by homeopaths themselves.

As a whole, little has changed. Homeopathy is everywhere a contrary practice. Hahnemann himself was aware of contradictory methods and results among his followers,⁹ and this problem has been the plague of homeopathy ever since. Some homeopaths are purists when it comes to Hahnemann’s theories; some pick and choose what seems suitable to them, and some reject most of his ideas entirely. Some are thus adamant about one aspect of homeopathy that others reject entirely; some prescribe homeopathic medicines in low dilutions, others in incredibly high dilutions, and both claim that only their method is proper. Some homeopaths are vitalists; others allegedly materialists. Some are modern and eclectic, prescribing a variety of additional remedies or therapies along with homeopathy; some stick to homeopathy alone.

In addition, the drugs and their symptoms vary considerably: “Thousands of homeopathic drugs are listed in the cults’ *Materia Medicas*—handbooks that vary widely from time to time and

from country to country¹⁰”

Furthermore, homeopathic *Materia Medicas* are not exactly reliable. As Oliver Wendell Holmes commented over a century ago in his critical lectures on homeopathy:

What are we to think of a standard *practical* author on *Materia Medica*, who at one time omits to designate the proper doses of his remedies, and at another to let us have any means of knowing whether a remedy has even been tried or not, while he is recommending its employment in the most critical and threatening diseases?¹¹

Some homeopaths think their medicines must be administered in a state of absolute purity, unmixed with other substances, otherwise you will destroy its effectiveness. But other homeopaths mix substances freely and claim it is too cumbersome to try and find the one “correct” remedy according to classical homeopathy.¹²

With homeopaths employing anti-scientific methods, subjective evaluations, and occultic practices and with wide disagreements about theory and practice, it is hardly surprising that the world of homeopathy lives in such disarray.¹³

As noted, Dr. Richard Grossinger spent ten years researching homeopathy. He concludes that in recent years around the world, “Standards have deteriorated; far worse, there is controversy from country to country, and even from doctor to doctor, as to what constitutes acceptable homeopathic treatment.”¹⁴ He ends his discussion by noting:

Different levels and types of homeopathy are inevitable as long as basic contradictions within the system and the practice are unresolved. A person today seeking homeopathic treatment truly enters a great metaphysical riddle, further compounded by historical and ideological variations. We are finally left without an absolutely clear sense of what homeopathy is, without a sense that will allow us to judge practitioners and give clear advice to people seeking doctors.¹⁵

Perhaps James Taylor Kent was correct when he commented, “We cannot rid ourselves of confusion until we learn what confusion is.”¹⁶

Notes:

¹ See “Homeopathy, Part 3” (November 2004) for more details.

² James Tyler Kent, *Lectures on Homeopathic Philosophy* (Richmond, CA: North Atlantic Books, 1979), pp. 81, 87.

³ Richard Grossinger, *Planet Medicine: From Stone Age Shamanism to Post-Industrial Healing* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1980), p. 231.

⁴ Grossinger, *Planet Medicine*, p. 238, cf. p. 234.

⁵ Kent, *Lectures*, p. ii.

⁶ Samuel Hahnemann, *Organ of Medicine*, 6th ed., rpt. (New Dehli, India: B. Jain Publishers, 1978), p. 167.

⁷ Douglas Stalker, Clark Glymour, eds., *Examining Holistic Medicine* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1985), p. 242; cf. p. 225.

⁸ Oliver Wendell Holmes, “Homeopathy,” in *Ibid.*, p. 241.

⁹ e.g., Samuel Hahnemann, *The Chronic Diseases, Their Peculiar Nature and Their Homeopathic Cure—Theoretical Part*, trans., Louis H. Tafel (New Dehli, India: Jain Publishing Co., 1976), p. 18.

¹⁰ Martin Gardner, “Water with Memory? The Dilution Affair: A Special Report,” *The Skeptical Inquirer*, Winter, 1989, p. 133; See also Wallace I. Sampson, “When Not to Believe the Unbelievable,” and Elie A. Shneour, “The Benveniste Case: A Reappraisal,” in *The Skeptical Inquirer*, Vol. 14, No. 1, Fall, 1989, pp. 90-95.

¹¹ Holmes, “Homeopathy,” p. 230.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 223; Evelyn deSmedt, et al., *Life Arts: A Practical Guide to Total Being—New Medicine and Ancient Wisdom* (New York, NY: St. Martin’s Press, 1977), p. 143.

¹³ Holmes, “Homeopathy,” pp. 225, 242; Kent, *Lectures*, p. 81.

¹⁴ Grossinger, *Planet Medicine*, p. 240.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 244.

¹⁶ Kent, *Lectures*, p. 55.